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THESIS

HOW MILITARY ACTIONS AFFECTED CITIZEN
SECURITY DURING PLAN COLOMBIA

by

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June 2015

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HOW MILITARY ACTIONS AFFECTED CITIZEN SECURITY DURING PLAN COLOMBIA

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the effects on citizen security caused by the Colombian military's actions during Plan Colombia and its successor plans. Military actions are often evaluated according to their effect on state security, but the concern of this thesis is whether or not the advantages of military security actions outweighed the costs for Colombian citizens. The military benefited citizens by weakening the insurgency and increasing state presence across Colombia's territory, but the military's involvement also incurred costs, including human rights abuses and large numbers of internally displaced persons. Considerable disagreement exists over the final value of the military's involvement, as it does over many aspects of Plan Colombia. This thesis seeks to add some clarity to the debate, with a focus on military operations' effects on civilians' lives, while also asking what the Colombian experience can teach the United States (and other countries) about counterinsurgency. Overall, this thesis finds that the use of the Colombian military during Plan Colombia improved citizen security, and furthermore that the United States played a positive role in this outcome.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AUC	*Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia* (United Self Defense Forces of Colombia)
CERAC	*Centro de Recursos para el Análisis de Conflictos* (Resource Center for Conflict Analysis)
CINEPP/PPP	*Centro de Investigación y Educación Popular—Programa por la Paz* (Center for Investigation and Popular Education—Program for Peace)
CODHES	*Consultoría para los Derechos Humanos y el Desplazamiento* (Consultancy for Human Rights and Displacement)
ECLAC	Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean
ELN	*Ejército de Liberación Nacional* (National Liberation Army)
FARC	*Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia* (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia)
UNDP	United Nation's Development Programme
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USSOCOM	United States Special Operations Command

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I. INTRODUCTION

"From Failed State to Tourist Haven: If only Iraq, Russia, and Libya were more like … Colombia."[1] That is the title of a 2014 newspaper article by Matthew Kaminski in The *Wall Street Journal*. Though many might debate the labels "failed state" and/or "tourist haven," the article's title nonetheless captures the sense of dramatic turnaround that many hold concerning Colombia. It is partly this idea of turnaround that makes Colombia a relevant topic of study today. Many, including Kaminski, see the country as a model for other states that are experiencing their own insurgencies.[2] There are plenty of people on the other side who argue that Colombia is not a model worth following.[3] There is not, however, a shortage of locations for applying successful counterinsurgency lessons; so, which side of the debate is correct (or which aspects of each side), matters.

This thesis assesses the debate over Plan Colombia[4] by investigating if the Colombian military's actions improved the security of Colombian citizens. Military actions are most often interpreted with regard to their effect on the state's security, but this thesis analyzes the military's effects on the citizenry and asks whether or not the benefits of military security actions outweighed the costs for Colombian citizens. The benefits of the Colombian military's involvement have come in various forms, including

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[1] Matthew Kaminski, "From Failed State to Tourist Haven: If only Iraq, Russia and Libya were more like … Colombia," *Wall Street Journal*, 8 September 2014, http://www.wsj.com/articles/from-failed-state-to-tourist-haven-1409872739?mod=Opinion_newsreel_6.

[2] See Peter DeShazo, Tanya Primiani, and Phillip McLean, *Back from the Brink: Evaluating Progress in Colombia, 1999–2007* (Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2007); Thomas A. Marks, "A Model Counterinsurgency: Uribe's Colombia (2002–2006)," *Military Review* 87, no. 2 (March 2007): EBSCO Host accession no. 25012950; Mark Moyar, Hector Pagan, and Wil R. Griego, *Persistent Engagement in Colombia*, JSOU Report 14-3 (MacDill Air Force Base, FL: The JSOU Press, 2014).

[3] See Adam Isacson, "Colombia: Don't Call it a Model," Washington Office on Latin America, 13 July 2010, http://www.wola.org/publications/colombia_dont_call_it_a_model; Samir Elhawary, "Security for Whom? Stabilization and Civilian Protection in Colombia," Disasters 34, (October 2010): S388-S405, doi: 10.1111/j.1467-7717.2010.01211.x; Oeindrila Dube and Suresh Naidu, "Bases, Bullets, and Ballots: The Effect of U.S. Military Aid on Political Conflict in Colombia," (Working paper 197, Center for Global Development, Washington, DC, January 2010).

[4] Unless otherwise noted, for simplicity "Plan Colombia" is used to refer to the strategy that was launched in 1999 by Colombian President Pastrana, officially titled Plan Colombia, and to the follow-on plans, both Colombian and U.S., that have continued the work of the original.

a greatly weakened insurgency and increased state presence across Colombia's territory. The costs of the military's involvement include human rights abuses against civilians and massive internal migration, with resulting poverty, due to the three-way fighting between the military, the insurgents, and the paramilitaries. Considerable disagreement exists over the value of the military's involvement, as it does over many other aspects of Plan Colombia (including basic questions, such as if security improved and what the sources of insecurity were). This thesis aims to add to our understanding of the security situation in Colombia, with a focus on the effects of military counterinsurgency operations on the lives of normal civilians, but also with an eye toward what the Colombian experience can tell the United States about its involvement in counterinsurgencies, especially its use of U.S. military members to train or advise foreign militaries. In the end, this thesis finds that the use of the Colombian military during Plan Colombia increased citizen security, and furthermore that the United States played a positive role in this outcome.

A.   LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature concerning Plan Colombia falls mainly into two categories. The first category argues that Plan Colombia was a great success, that it brought significant gains in peace and security to the country, and that it could prove useful as a template elsewhere. The second category argues that there was no great success, that the claims of peace and security are exaggerated or wrong, and that Plan Colombia is not a good template for other countries facing insurgencies. Representative of the second category, Adam Isacson declares, "Copying [Colombia's] model elsewhere would be disastrous."[5] Both sides agree that there was at least some improvement in the country's security during Plan Colombia and that there are still many problems facing the country, but the two camps remain divided on the value of the security improvement, particularly regarding the lives of the rural poor. Additionally, the impact of the United States' contributions is debated. Interpretations of the United States' impact tend to be divided into two sides, following the same lines as interpretations of the plan's success: those who believe Plan Colombia was a success view U.S. contributions as positive, and those

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[5] Isacson, "Colombia: Don't Call it a Model."

who believe it was a failure view U.S. involvement negatively. The next section describes the two main camps regarding Plan Colombia (pro and con), and then addresses the literature on the U.S. military's contribution to the effort.

The proponents of Plan Colombia emphasize statistics describing a reduction in violent actions committed by the guerrilla forces fighting against the state. Certain examples recur frequently. Among these are reductions in murders, kidnappings, oil and electricity infrastructure attacks, and an increase in the numbers of guerrillas and paramilitary members killed, captured, or induced to desert, and an increase in the number of people using national highways.[6] Certainly, the quoted figures look impressive. According to Peter DeShazo, Tanya Primiani, and Phillip McLean, the number of murders in Colombia decreased by 40% from 2002 to 2006 and the number of kidnappings declined by 80% from 2000 to 2006.[7] Concerning electricity and oil attacks, they point out that "attacks on electricity towers, mainly committed by guerrillas, declined from 483 in 2002 to [an annualized figure of 114 for] 2007 and only 39 bombings of oil pipelines were recorded during the first eight months of 2007 [an annualized figure of 59] compared with a peak of 184 in 2003."[8] The United States Government Accountability Office notes that ridership on Colombian roads increased from just under 100 million riders in 2000 to a little over 160 million riders in 2006.[9] The reduction in the membership of non-state violent organizations has been significant (though exact numbers are difficult to obtain). As an example, the Government Accountability Office estimates that the FARC lost approximately 53% of its membership between 2001 and 2008.[10] The proponents of Plan Colombia point to numbers like these and claim success, though with the caveat that much more needs to be done since even the dramatic gains have not brought insecurity down to a desirable level.

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[6] DeShazo, Primiani, and McLean, *Back from the Brink*, 15–20; Jess Ford, *Plan Colombia: Drug Reduction Goals Were Not Fully Met, but Security Has Improved; U.S. Agencies Need More Detailed Plans for Reducing Assistance* (GAO-09-71) (Washington, DC: United States Government Accountability Office, 6 October 2008), 5, 24, 35, http://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-09-71.

[7] DeShazo, Primiani, and McLean, *Back from the Brink*, 18.

[8] Ibid., 17.

[9] Ford, *Drug Reduction Goals*, 24.

[10] Ibid., 25.

Detractors of Plan Colombia acknowledge the improvement in the figures noted above, but they point to other figures that they say indicate the plan did not succeed. Human rights violations and the presence of large numbers of internally displaced persons figure prominently for this camp, as do economic factors and the continuing high, albeit reduced, levels of violence in the country. Authors such as Isacson cite the millions of Colombians displaced in the 2000s, a problem that continues today, as evidence that supposed security gains are not really accomplishing much.[11] The violence conducted by right-wing paramilitaries, in combination with their connections to the Colombian government, provides another argument for those who see Plan Colombia as less than successful.[12] Colombia's purported success is also attacked in terms of equality. Critics state that UN statistics indicate that Colombia was one of only three Latin American states to become more unequal between 2002 and 2008, based on the Gini coefficient.[13] (In fact, the World Bank calculations of the Gini coefficient actually show the opposite trend for Colombia during the same period, claiming Colombia became more equal.)[14] Despite the disagreement on the exact coefficient or trend, both agree that Colombia is highly unequal, with the World Bank ranking it tied for 143rd out of 155 evaluated states.[15] For the detractor camp the negative conditions that persist in Colombia in spite of Plan Colombia mean the successes of the plan are hollow at best and that, in the words of journalist Milburn Line, "The FARC insurgency may keep itself going indefinitely with drug money. The next $7 billion from Washington could do a lot more for social development and a peace process in Colombia."[16]

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[11] Isacson, "Colombia: Don't Call it a Model."

[12] Forrest Hylton, "Plan Colombia: The Measure of Success," *Brown Journal of World Affairs* 17, no. 1 (Fall/Winter 2010): 107–108, Business Source Complete, EBSCO host (accession number: 60576434).

[13] United Nations, *Social Panorama of Latin America 2009* (Santiago, Chile, 2009), 54.

[14] The World Bank, "World Development Indicators," The World Bank DataBank, http://databank.worldbank.org/data/views/variableselection/selectvariables.aspx?source=world-development-indicators.

[15] The World Bank, "Distribution of Income or Consumption (Table 2.9)," World Development Indicators, The World Bank, 23 September 2013, http://wdi.worldbank.org/table/2.9#.

[16] Milburn Line, "Counterpoint: A New Plan for Colombia," *International Herald Tribune*, 19 August 2010, http://search.proquest.com/docview/744499339?accountid=12702.

Like the major data points just mentioned, the material contributions of the United States to Plan Colombia are well documented, but how much of the change in the Colombian situation was the result of U.S. contributions is difficult to determine. This appears true for all aspects of U.S. aid (money, equipment, personnel), and certainly for U.S. military training efforts. In his review of the literature on Colombia, Jonathan Catalano found that "while there are several articles extolling the importance of foreign assistance, few articles attempt to evaluate its impact using empirical evidence. Of the few articles that do utilize empirical evidence, there is polarization among opinions regarding the effectiveness of foreign assistance as a tool to pursue strategic security objectives."[17] In Catalano's efforts to add to the empirical study of foreign assistance, he concludes that, "funds that were applied to long term military expansion proved to be the most effective starting point for reducing the prevalence of illegal activity (both illicit crops and leftist guerrilla groups)."[18]

Rather than using empirical analysis, many authors base their findings on specific cases where success was achieved and the United States was involved, using such cases to demonstrate that the United States had a positive effect. The Government Accountability Office's October 2008 report on Plan Colombia provides a typical example: "U.S. assistance has increased the Colombian military's overall operational capability, in particular, its air mobility. These enhanced capabilities have contributed to a number of achievements including the Colombian military's seizure of hundreds of tons of illicit drugs, an estimated 50% reduction in FARC combatants since the outset of Plan Colombia, and the extension of the government's presence."[19] Mark Moyar, Hector Pagan, and Wil R. Griego follow a similar pattern in their assessment of the training efforts of U.S. special operations forces during Plan Colombia. They claim success for the training because the trained Colombian units participated in the (successful) attempts at improving security.[20] Moyar, Pagan, and Griego assert a definite increase in the

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[17] Jonathan R. Catalano, "The Efficacy of Foreign Assistance in Counter Narcotics," (Master's Thesis, Naval Postgraduate School, Monterey, CA, 2013), 7, https://calhoun.nps.edu/handle/10945/32803.

[18] Catalano, "Efficacy of Foreign Assistance," 44.

[19] Ford, *Drug Reduction Goals*, 6.

[20] Moyar, Pagan, and Griego, *Persistent Engagement.*

professionalism, effectiveness, and capacity of the Colombian military, which in turn generated more citizen security and fewer human rights violations. Unfortunately, they do not attempt a more general and empirical determination of gains or losses in citizen security (or any other measure) resulting from the use of special operations forces. Instead, they focus solely on the qualitative aspects of engagement by U.S. special operations forces.[21]

Some empirical work has been done, but it is limited. The RAND Corporation provides an empirical study of U.S. security aid, but it is a statistical analysis of security cooperation provided by the United States to 107 countries from 1991-2008.[22] Colombia is part of the study and figures prominently in their case studies, but specific findings are not reached for Colombia (or any one state). Furthermore, the RAND study does not separate the military from the other components of security cooperation so no direct lesson is available concerning military training efforts in particular. Nonetheless, the RAND study does find that there is a "statistically significant correlation between U.S. [security cooperation] spending on average and improvement in the recipient country's fragility."[23] (RAND uses the State Fragility Index of the Center for Systemic Peace. Fragility is defined by the level of "effectiveness and legitimacy across four development dimensions: security, political, economic, and social."[24]) They also find that the amount of correlation varies with the type of security cooperation, with non-materiel aid producing strong correlation and materiel aid producing no correlation.[25]

While the preceding study suggests that security aid is generally beneficial (and that the Colombian situation is in line with the positive findings), other studies find a negative impact from military aid. One such study, by Oeindrila Dube and Suresh Naidu, finds that paramilitary attacks increased in relative measure in *municipios* with

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[21] Ibid., 1.

[22] Michael J. McNerney et al., *Assessing Security Cooperation as a Preventive Tool* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2014), xiv.

[23] Ibid., 93.

[24] Monty G. Marshall and Benjamin R. Cole, *Global Report 2014: Conflict, Governance, and State Fragility* (Vienna, VA: Center for Systemic Peace, 2014), 33, www.systemicpeace.org/globalreport.html.

[25] McNerney et al., Assessing Security Cooperation, 93.

Colombian military bases following the introduction of U.S. military aid, while guerrilla attacks were unaffected. Additionally, the study discovered that U.S. military aid reduced voter participation in these same areas (*municipios* with Colombian military bases).[26] In explaining their outcome, these two authors focus on the potential movement of monetary and materiel aid from the military to the paramilitaries as a result of government-paramilitary collusion.[27] These findings give strong support to the detractors of Plan Colombia specifically, and of U.S. military aid generally.

Despite the relatively abundant amount of literature concerning Plan Colombia and related subjects, the fact remains that there is still considerable disagreement over the true effects of military action on citizen security, and what lessons can be learned from Plan Colombia. Convincing arguments fall on both sides of the main positive-negative divide, even within the few empirical studies. The contradictory nature of the opposing studies and the low amount of objective evidence make a clear call for further study of the issue, especially given the potential to improve the situation of unstable countries based on lessons from Colombia's apparent success.

B.   POTENTIAL EXPLANATIONS AND HYPOTHESES

The hypothesis of this paper is that Colombian military actions during Plan Colombia improved citizen security overall. The complicated situation surrounding Plan Colombia, however, allows for many explanations and hypotheses regarding the effects of the various attempts to improve conditions in Colombia.

The first set of alternative explanations, as suggested by the literature review, directly opposes the hypothesis of this thesis. These arguments claim that the military was detrimental to citizen security, or that there was no improvement in security. The main alternatives of this type are addressed in the body of the thesis, especially in Chapter III.

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[26] Dube and Naidu, "Bases, Bullets, and Ballots," 26.

[27] Ibid.

Other hypotheses agree that citizen security improved in Colombia, but assert that the military cannot take the credit. One such explanation might assert that the reason citizen security improved was that Colombia's economic growth during the period of Plan Colombia reduced criminal activity. According to the World Bank, Colombia's GDP per capita grew from $2,503.50 in 2000 to $7,763.00 in 2012 (figures in 2014 U.S. dollars), which is a 210% increase.[28] (For comparison, the following is a sampling of countries showing their own GDP per capita increase for the same years, again in 2014 U.S. dollars: Chile: 197%, Ecuador: 287%, Mexico: 49%, Peru: 228%, Venezuela: 165%, United States: 41%.)[29] What effect this economic growth had on Colombia's violence is a complicated problem to work out.[30] There is not space in this thesis to adequately explore the topic (though it does merit exploration), and furthermore, since the growth in Colombia was not outside the norm for the region, and because Plan Colombia was based on the idea that a lack of security was at the root of Colombia's other problems, focusing on the effects of security changes rather than economic changes is most appropriate here.[31]

Another possible alternative to the hypothesis of this thesis might question the metrics used to conclude that Plan Colombia is a success. This was done in one manner by the Dube and Naidu study discussed earlier, but there are still other possible alternatives to the standard success story. One alternative is that the oft-referenced improvements in murders, kidnappings, and highway traffic were a result less of government success and more of the huge internal displacement of people in Colombia. Increased security in certain regions may have allowed people to flee the more dangerous zones, leading to a decrease in murders and kidnappings, but at the expense of the

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[28] The World Bank, "World Development Indicators."

[29] Ibid.

[30] See: Niclas A. Krüger, "The Impact of Economic Fluctuations on Crime: A Multiscale Analysis," *Applied Economics Letters* 18, no. 2 (2011): 179, http://search.proquest.com/docview/849245239? accountid=12702; Richard Rosenfeld and Robert Fornango, "The Impact of Economic Conditions on Robbery and Property Crime: The Role of Consumer Sentiment," *Criminology* 45, no. 4 (2007): 735, doi: 10.1111/j.1745-9125.2007.00096.x; Mingming Pan, Benjamin Widner, and Carl E. Enomoto, "Growth and Crime in Contiguous States of Mexico," *Review of Urban & Regional Development Studies* 24, no. 1–2 (March 2012): 51, doi: 10.1111/j.1467-940X.2012.00188.x.

[31] Elhaway, "Security for Whom?" 402; Marks, "Model Counterinsurgency," 54.

creation of millions of refugees.[32] Such a trade-off would not be considered a success by many, and it is likely to create its own security problems over time. A detailed analysis of Colombia's internal displacement is also outside the scope of this thesis, though it is closely tied to security issues and is definitely a subject worth further investigation.

C.   RESEARCH DESIGN

This thesis is a single case study examining the effects of Colombia's military on citizen security from 2000 to 2013. A case study is indicated by the research question because the question is focused specifically on the effects of the military, with a desire to discover lessons that could be applied to states facing similar challenges. Case studies such as this one are useful because they augment broader statistical work to determine trends in security cooperation. The wider statistical studies may indicate that security cooperation tends to be helpful, but case studies aid in improving the effectiveness of security cooperation by promulgating lessons learned. This thesis was conducted as a desktop study between July 2014 and May 2015 using publicly available material.

D.   THESIS OVERVIEW

Following this introduction, Chapter II addresses the main argument of this thesis, defines citizen security, and explains the main sources of insecurity for citizens in Colombia during the period in question. It then describes the Colombian military's role in combating these sources of insecurity and how its actions improved citizen security. Chapter III addresses the main critiques of the assertion that the military improved security. Specifically, it discusses concerns over the methodology used to support the case, as well as concerns over the negative effects of military actions, and over the potentially uneven social distribution of effects. Chapter IV looks at U.S. military involvement in Plan Colombia and some of the lessons from this experience that might be of benefit in other situations. Chapter V summarizes the thesis in a conclusion.

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[32] See Gabriel Rojas Andrade and Paola Hurtado, "Grupos posdesmovilización y desplazamiento forzado en Colombia: una aproximación cuantitativa" [Demobilized groups and forced displacement in Colombia: A quantitative approximation], Consultoría para los Derechos Humanos y el Desplazamiento, http://www.codhes.org/images/Articulos/GPD_y_desplazamiento_forzado_en_Colombia.pdf.

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II. THE MILITARY AND IMPROVED CITIZEN SECURITY DURING PLAN COLOMBIA

This chapter examines the debate over Colombia's value as a positive counterinsurgency example. We assume that the main purpose of the state is to protect the rights of its citizens, and that these rights include protection from harm by other individuals. As such, a state faced with an insurgency that harms its citizens has a duty to counter the insurgency and restore citizen security. In this context, this chapter considers the state of citizen security in Colombia and whether the Colombian government's use of its military improved citizen security during the years of Plan Colombia. We first describe some of the major sources of insecurity in Colombia, for both the citizens and the state. We then turn to the military's role in combating these sources of insecurity, with primary attention given to insurgency, especially the FARC. Next, we examine the changing nature of citizen security during the Plan, and argue that the military did contribute to improved citizen security by severely weakening one of the main sources of insecurity (the guerrilla groups) and by returning a large amount of territory to state control. The security gains resulting from the military were not unmitigated. The military itself committed acts of violence against citizens, and the regaining of territorial control did not translate automatically into the establishment of effective state institutions that could maintain the security gains and further develop them. Furthermore, the security gains came primarily during the early 2000s, and the security situation has since stagnated, even worsened by some measures, since then. Nevertheless, the overall changes in citizen security demonstrate a positive effect from the actions of the military.

A. CITIZEN SECURITY DEFINED

Since it is one of the central concepts of this thesis, and because it does not have a single, widely recognized definition, the term "citizen security" needs to be defined before proceeding further. Security can encompass many different aspects of life, but in an attempt to keep the definition manageable and meaningful this thesis follows the United Nations Development Programme's (UNDP) lead in defining the term as "the

protection of life and of people's physical and material integrity."[33] The UNDP emphasizes that citizen security is not merely reducing the rate of crime and violence; it is also the creation of government policy that fosters the development of citizens such that they eschew crime and violence.[34] This thesis agrees, but since the emphasis here is on the military, a branch of the government that is focused on the immediate provision of security, this thesis focuses on the reduction of rates of crime and violence and largely leaves matters of development aside (not because they are unimportant, but because they are outside the scope of this study). In order to reduce crime and violence the Colombian government needed to reestablish legitimate state presence throughout its territory and to end the operations of major illegal armed groups (including the FARC); this is what Plan Colombia was designed to do.[35]

B.   MAJOR SOURCES OF INSECURITY

In 1999, when Plan Colombia was announced, the Colombian state had been fighting leftist insurgencies for over three decades. Communist militant and peasant self-defense groups started the FARC in the mid-1960s to fight against the Colombian government, which had excluded the far left from the power-sharing agreement that ended the conflict between the Liberals and Conservatives, known as *La Violencia*.[36] Since then the FARC have moved outside their philosophical roots and has developed as a criminal organization that earns money through drug trafficking, extortion, kidnapping,

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[33] United Nations Development Programme, *Regional Human Development Report 2013–2014 Citizen Security with a Human Face: Evidence and Proposals for Latin America* (Panama: Regional Service Centre for Latin America and the Caribbean, 2013), 4, http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/librarypage/hdr/human-development-report-for-latin-america-2013-2014/. The Development Programme also includes an "individual's right to lead life with dignity" (5) in its full definition, but this thesis leaves dignity out of the equation since it is a poorly defined concept and even the Development Programme's own report does not address how dignity relates to security.

[34] Ibid., 5.

[35] Marks, "Model Counterinsurgency," 54; Ford, *Drug Reduction Goals*, 1.

[36] Nazih Richani, "Caudillos and the Crisis of the Colombian State: Fragmented Sovereignty, the War System and the Privatization of Counterinsurgency in Colombia," *Third World Quarterly* 28, no. 2 (2007): 406, http://www.jstor.org/stable/4017705; Danielle Renwick and Stephanie Hanson, "FARC, ELN: Colombia's Left-Wing Guerrillas," Backgrounders, Council on Foreign Relations, updated 1 December 2014, http://www.cfr.org/colombia/farc-eln-colombias-left-wing-guerrillas/p9272.

and even illegal gold mining.[37] Over the decades, the strength and wealth of the FARC grew such that by the late 1990s the FARC were strong enough to directly challenge the Colombian state, including the military. The FARC had both size and skill: membership in the early 2000s is estimated to have been at its peak strength, with between 16,000 and 20,000 personnel, and they were an effective enough fighting force that they were capable of conducting, and winning, offensive battles against the military.[38] In the late 1990s, as part of its long-term strategy for overthrowing the state, the group moved from traditional guerrilla tactics to directly challenging the Colombian military in mobile warfare. This began with attacks on small, isolated forces, but the FARC quickly proved that they could threaten and defeat large Colombian forces in pitched battles. One of the more famous (and infamous for the Colombian military) examples is the 1998 ambush at El Billar, where approximately 450 guerrillas ambushed 153 soldiers from one of Colombia's elite mobile brigades and over the course of three days killed 62 of them, while capturing 43 and dispersing the rest.[39] Defeats like this raised serious concerns over whether the Colombian state could respond to the insurgent threat. Even before the El Billar defeat, the United States Defense Intelligence Agency had determined that the prospects for the Colombian government were grim. As reported by *The Washington Post*, the analysis "concluded that Colombia's military, battling a Marxist insurgency financed by millions of dollars from the cocaine and heroin trade, could be defeated within five years unless the Bogota government regains political legitimacy and its armed forces are drastically restructured."[40]

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[37] Camilo Echandía Castilla and Eduardo Bechara Gómez, "Conducta de la Guerrilla Durante el Gobierno Uribe Vélez: de las Lógicas de Control Territorial a las Lógicas de Control Estratégico" [Guerrilla Conduct during the Uribe Velez government: From the logic of territorial control to the logic of strategic control], *Analisis Politico* 19, no. 57 (August 2006), 48, http://www.scielo.org.co/scielo.php?pid= s0121-47052006000200002&script=sci_arttext; Renwick and Hanson, "FARC, ELN."

[38] June S. Beittel, *Peace Talks in Colombia* (CRS Report No. R42982) (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 3 April 2014), 4, https://fas.org/sgp/crs/row/R42982.pdf; Echandía and Bechara, "Conducta de la Guerrilla" [Guerrilla Conduct], 33; David Spencer, "Bogota Continues to Bleed as FARC Find their Military Feet," *Jane's Intelligence Review* 10, no. 011 (1 November 1998), ProQuest (document ID: 198071637), http://search.proquest.com/docview/198071637?accountid=12702.

[39] Spencer, "Bogota Continues to Bleed." Note: The FARC claimed 80 soldiers killed, 62 is the figure from the army.

[40] Douglas Farah, "Colombian Rebels Seen Winning War; U.S. Study Finds Army Inept, Ill-Equipped," *Washington Post*, 10 April 1998, A17, ProQuest (document ID: 408360675).

Though it was the most dangerous to the state, the FARC was by no means the only illegal armed group. The ELN (*Ejército de Liberación Nacional*, or National Liberation Army in English) was another leftist insurgency-cum-criminal organization fighting against the state. The ELN was also founded in the 1960s in response to the exclusion of communists from the political sphere, however the group was, and continues to be, considerably smaller than the FARC. [41] The ELN reached its maximum strength in the 1990s, at around 5,000 members, with current estimates placing its fighters at fewer than 2,000.[42] Though capable of deadly attacks in both urban and rural areas, the ELN has never had the power to credibly threaten the military or the state, leading some to view the group as "essentially a law and order concern."[43]

Paramilitaries represent another significant armed challenge for the Colombian state. Paramilitary forces have existed for a long time in Colombia, sometimes legally, sometimes illegally, owing to a lack of state presence and/or security in many locations throughout the national territory. Colombian paramilitaries in their most recent form grew out of government encouragement in the late 1960s for citizens to protect themselves and fight the leftist insurgencies. By 1989, the cooptation of the paramilitaries by wealthy landowners and narco-traffickers led to so much violence against ordinary citizens that the state outlawed the formation of new groups, and in 1993, the paramilitaries were officially recognized as a security threat. Nonetheless, some government and military interests continued to align with the paramilitaries, leading to an enduring link between the state and the paramilitaries even as the state officially worked to combat them.[44]

Despite the significant challenges of the ELN and the paramilitaries, during the late 1990s the FARC represented the greatest direct threat to the Colombian state thanks to its large size, its considerable fighting ability, and its goal of carrying out a communist revolution. This was a real threat to the Colombian state. Not only was the FARC

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[41] Renwick, "Backgrounder."

[42] Beittel, *Peace Talks*, 9.

[43] Marks, "A Model Counterinsurgency," 50.

[44] Richani, "Caudillos," 406–408; Robert D. Ramsey III, *From El Billar to Operations Fenix and Jaque: The Colombian Security Force Experience, 1998–2008,* Occasional Paper 34 (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Combat Studies Institute Press, 2009), 10.

winning battles against the military, as illustrated earlier, but it also controlled large amounts of territory. Some estimates put FARC-controlled territory in the late 1990s at nearly 50% of Colombia.[45] The Colombian government's own estimate claimed partial or full control over only 70% of the country.[46] Other indicators, such as state presence, also speak to the precarious nature of the state: some observers estimated that 158 of Colombia's 1,099 *municipios* (similar to U.S. counties) had no state presence at all in the late 1990s.[47] Prior to 2002, 169 *municipios* specifically had no police presence.[48]

The threat of the FARC and the other illegal armed groups to the state is relevant to citizen security because the state is unable to fulfill its duties to its citizens when it is forced from an area by armed groups. If the state were the source of insecurity and the armed groups actually protected the people, then the lack of state presence might be a boon, but this was not the case in Colombia. The Colombian government did commit abuses, but it was also the best source of protection for its citizens, and providing this protection required the removal of the illegal armed groups. Within the illegal armed groups, the threat that the paramilitaries posed to citizen security is not contentious, but the threat posed by the insurgent groups, especially the FARC, sometimes is. The next section thus focuses on the security issues surrounding the FARC.

As Julia Sweig explains, the FARC's income is generated "primarily through the coca and poppy industries and ancillary kidnapping, extortion, and assassination rackets; the ELN specializes in kidnapping and also regularly targets Colombia's other major resource, oil."[49] Combine the financing activities with human rights abuses carried out in pursuit of political or military goals and the insurgents create substantial insecurity. For instance, insurgents have been responsible for the majority of kidnappings in Colombia

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[45] Mark Peceny and Michael Durnan, "The FARC's Best Friend: U.S. Antidrug Policies and the Deepening of Colombia's Civil War in the 1990s," *Latin American Politics and Society* 48, no. 2 (Summer 2006): 95; Beittel, *Peace Talks*, 4.

[46] Ford, *Drug Reduction Goals*, 24.

[47] Beittel, *Peace Talks*, 4.

[48] Ford, *Drug Reduction Goals*, 45.

[49] Julia Sweig, "What Kind of War for Colombia?," *Foreign Affairs* 81, no. 5 (2002): 123, http://www.jstor.org/stable/20033273. It should be noted that according to Sweig, the AUC makes its money through the same security-damaging methods as the FARC.

over the last 35 years, with the FARC being the worst offender of the insurgent groups.[50] Insurgents were responsible for 24,482 kidnappings between 1970 and 2010, 62.7% of a total of 39,053 during that period.[51] (Organized crime was the next worse group, with 9,568 kidnappings, or 24.5% of the total; the paramilitaries hold third place with 2,541 kidnappings, or 6.5% of the total, more than nine times fewer than the insurgents.[52] Organized crime refers to groups with purely financial motivations, as opposed to those with ideological or security motivations. This distinction is admittedly blurry on occasion.)

The insurgent groups (as well as the paramilitaries) also commit serious human rights violations by heavily recruiting and using child soldiers.[53] Human Rights Watch estimates that in 2003 20-30% of the FARC were children, and notes that if the urban militias are included this could mean that more than 7,400 children were fighting for the FARC in 2003.[54] The proportion of children in the paramilitaries was lower, with Human Rights Watch estimating in 2003 that "no more than 20% of AUC forces, including its urban cadres, are under eighteen, or 2,200 individuals."[55] Children are not spared any duties thanks to their age and they are subjected to inhumane treatment, including being forced to take part in battles, assassinations, executions, and torture.[56] It is not uncommon for children to be forced to carry out the execution sentences of other children, even of close friends.[57]

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[50] Grupo de Memoria Histórica, Informe General, *¡BASTA YA! Colombia: Memorias de Guerra y Dignidad* [Enough! Colombia: Memories of War and Dignity], (Bogotá, Colombia: Imprenta Nacional, 2013), 67, http://www.centrodememoriahistorica.gov.co/micrositios/informeGeneral/descargas.html.

[51] Ibid., 64–65.

[52] Ibid.

[53] Human Rights Watch, "*You'll Learn Not to Cry": Child Combatants in Colombia* (New York: Human Rights Watch, 2003), 24, http://www.hrw.org/reports/2003/09/18/you-ll-learn-not-cry.

[54] Ibid., 24.

[55] Ibid., 28.

[56] Ibid., 6, 61. See the publication for a detailed analysis of the extensive atrocities to which both guerilla and paramilitary children are subjected.

[57] Ibid., 73–74.

In addition to the violence of their financial and recruiting activities, the insurgents are also the main source of deaths caused by indiscriminate weapons.[58] While the government has outlawed the use of antipersonnel mines and the paramilitaries do not use them often, the use of mines by the insurgents, especially the FARC, rose considerably during the 2000s.[59] As Russell Crandall explains, "From 2000 to 2009, 7,000 Colombians were killed or wounded by mines, most of which were planted by FARC; today, mines lie across roughly 60% of Colombia's departments."[60] Human Rights Watch also points out that "in addition to using antipersonnel landmines, the FARC are notorious for their use of gas cylinder bombs."[61] These weapons are powerful but very difficult to aim and thus cause indiscriminant civilian casualties, which is a violation of international humanitarian law.[62] Both the FARC and the ELN regularly use gas cylinder bombs, whereas the paramilitaries do not use them.[63]

While the paramilitaries may not use indiscriminant weapons, they are still known for persecuting the civilian population. In contrast, as Human Rights Watch explains, the rules of the FARC require members to treat civilians well: "The FARC-EP prohibits unruly conduct by its fighters especially when they are among the civilian population. Robbery, extortion, threats, sexual abuse, and the irresponsible use of firearms can be capital offenses."[64] The insurgent groups are, in fact, considered to carry out fewer attacks directly against civilians, but the key distinction is "fewer." The respectable exhortations of the insurgents' rules do not provide much protection against insurgent abuses in reality. For example, in order to avoid looking soft when releasing hostages, in 2009 the FARC adopted a strategy of launching terror attacks that coincide with the

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[58] Human Rights Watch, *Maiming the People: Guerrilla Use of Antipersonnel Landmines and Other Indiscriminate Weapons in Colombia* (New York: Human Rights Watch, 2007), 1, http://www.hrw.org/reports/2007/07/24/maiming-people-0.

[59] Ibid., 6, 15.

[60] Russell Crandall "Requiem for the FARC?" *Survival: Global Politics and Strategy*, 53, no. 4 (2011): 234, doi: 10.1080/00396338.2011.603574.

[61] Human Rights Watch, *Maiming*, 12.

[62] Ibid., 12–13.

[63] Human Rights Watch, *Child Combatants*, 61, 65–66, 134.

[64] Ibid., 69.

releases.[65] As an illustration, Jim Rochlin points to a FARC bombing "of a Blockbuster video store in a crowded area of Bogotá that killed two and injured 20 just prior to the group's release in early 2009 of six hostages."[66] The 2009 implementation of this strategy is reflected in the long-term data for terror attacks in Colombia related to the armed conflict. The data show a similar trend to the crime statistics covered later in this chapter: terror attacks increased sharply in the late 1990s, reaching a peak around 2002 before falling off sharply in response to the government's counterinsurgency offensive; the numbers then begin to rise again in 2009.[67] Grupo de Memoria Histórica documents the attacks, showing "95 terror attacks in the armed conflict between 1988 and 2012, with a total of 223 people killed and 1,343 people injured. Of the 95 cases, 77 were perpetrated by guerrilla groups (principally the FARC, with 55, and the ELN, with 12), 16 by unidentified armed groups, and two by the paramilitaries."[68]

While the terror attacks previously mentioned do not directly affect a large number of people, other actions by the insurgents do have a widespread direct effect. In a 2001 publication discussing the FARC's compliance with international humanitarian law, Human Rights Watch condemned the group for widespread violations of international humanitarian law, including the abduction and killing of civilians, use of indiscriminate weapons, hostage-taking (kidnapping), inhumane treatment of prisoners, recruitment of child soldiers, and attacks and threats against medical workers and facilities.[69] These violations occurred not only in disputed regions but also in areas where the FARC are unchallenged, including in the demilitarized zone that was established as a safe area for the FARC as part of peace negotiations from 1998 to 2002 with the Pastrana government.

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[65] Rochlin, "Plan Colombia and the Revolution in Military Affairs," 739.

[66] Ibid.

[67] Grupo de Memoria Histórica, *¡BASTA YA!* [Enough!], 102, 104.

[68] Ibid., 102. Grupo de Memoria Histórica defines terror attacks as "indiscriminate attacks carried out with explosives against civilian objectives in public locations, with the goal of creating high degrees of death and destruction. The attacks are designed to ensure public visibility of the violence, thereby contributing to panic in the population and a perception of destabilization." Grupo de Memoria Histórica, *¡BASTA YA!*, 101.

[69] Human Rights Watch, *Beyond Negotiation: International Humanitarian Law and its Application to the Conduct of the FARC-EP* (New York: Human Rights Watch, 2001), 3, 4, 5, http://www.hrw.org/reports/2001/08/01/beyond-reason.

The Colombian government completely withdrew from this area with the agreement that the FARC would provide for the protection of citizens. While the FARC were in charge, thousands of people were forcibly displaced either by direct threats from the FARC or because they feared for the safety of themselves or their family.[70]

Thirteen years after the FARC's abuses in the demilitarized zone, Human Rights Watch released published an article detailing the abuses in another area dominated by the FARC, the city of Tumaco on the southern Pacific coast of Colombia. Although the FARC is by no means the only group to have committed human rights abuses in Tumaco (paramilitary successor groups and even the military are also mentioned in the report), the FARC has been a major contributor to the violence, and it has continued to inflict violence on the population even since winning the battle for territorial control against paramilitary successor groups in late 2013. The FARC offenses listed by in the report include "killings, disappearances, kidnapping, torture, forced displacement, attempted forced recruitment, planting landmines, extortion, and death threats against community leaders. Official data indicates the FARC has also committed sexual violence in Tumaco in 2013 and 2014."[71] José Miguel Vivanco, Americas director at Human Rights Watch, sums up the article: "FARC abuses are devastating Tumaco's afro-Colombian communities. The FARC has a tight grip over the lives of many Tumaco residents, who are forced to keep silent as the guerrillas plant their fields with landmines, drive them from their homes, and kill their neighbors and loved ones with impunity."[72] The willingness of the insurgents to engage in human rights abuses against civilians on an ongoing basis over many years speaks to the lie in the insurgents' regard for the well-being of civilians and demonstrates some of the ways in which the groups harm citizen security.

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[70] Human Rights Watch, *Beyond Negotiation*, 18–19.

[71] Human Rights Watch, "Colombia: FARC Battering Afro-Colombian Areas," Human Rights Watch, 30 July 2014, http://www.hrw.org/news/2014/07/30/colombia-farc-battering-afro-colombian-areas.

[72] Ibid.

C.   THE MILITARY'S ROLE IN COMBATING INSECURITY

Countering the insecurity created by the FARC and other illegal armed groups required the Colombian state to subdue these groups, a goal toward which the military has made significant progress. In the 1990s, the military began significant internal reforms aimed at making it an effective fighting force that could counter the insurgencies it faced.[73] Though reforms were widespread, they "focused mainly on revitalizing the military education system, turning lessons learned into operational and organizational modifications, and developing sound NCO leadership to enhance small unit performance."[74] Plan Colombia, as initiated by President Pastrana and strengthened by President Uribe, significantly increased military spending and improved the combat capacity, training, and logistics of the Colombian armed forces.[75] These efforts were facilitated in part by the United States (the role of which is dicussed later, particularly in Chapter IV), but more significantly by the Colombian people. In particular, President Uribe was able to pass a so-called war tax to help finance the military's reforms and fighting activities. Aimed at wealthy Colombians and renewed in various forms throughout Uribe's tenure and into that of President Santos, the tax brought in about $1 billion a year for the government.[76] Notable changes as a result of the Colombian (and U.S.) efforts include the large jump in military personnel and the extensive helicopter acquisitions. The armed forces increased in size by 68% between 1999 and 2007, with an even greater amount of growth (290%) in the number of professional soldiers (as opposed to conscripts, who made up the majority of the force).[77] The helicopter inventory

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[73] Marks, "Model Counterinsurgency," 50–52.

[74] Ibid., 51.

[75] DeShazo, Primiani, and McLean, *Back from the Brink*, 11, 15; International Crisis Group, "Tougher Challenges ahead for Colombia's Uribe," *Latin America Briefing,* no.11 (Bogotá/Brussels: International Crisis Group, 20 October 2006), 3, http://www.crisisgroup.org/~/media/Files/latin-america/colombia/b11_colombia_uribe_s_second_term.pdf.

[76] Thomas C. Bruneau, "Civilians and the Military in Latin America: The Absence of Incentives," *Latin American Politics and Society* 55, no. 4 (2013): 155, doi: 10.1111/j.1548-2456.2013.00216.x155; Nazih Richani, *Systems of Violence: The Political Economy of War and Peace in Colombia*, 2nd ed. (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2013), 203, http://muse.jhu.edu/books/9781438446950; Afeikhena Jerome, "Lessons from Colombia for Curtailing the Boko Haram Insurgency in Nigeria," *PRISM* 5, no. 2 (2015): 104, http://cco.dodlive.mil/files/2015/02/PRISM-V5N2-Africa-3_19.pdf.

[77] DeShazo, Primiani, and McLean, *Back from the Brink*, 16.

increased from approximately 20 in 1998 to 265 in 2007 (counting military and police aircraft together), an increase which helped provide the security forces the mobility they needed to conduct both offensive and defensive operations against the insurgents.[78] The reforms and added support from the civilian government paid off, and the military gained the initiative against the FARC by the mid-2000s.[79] During these early years of Plan Colombia, the military succeeded in destroying the FARC's ability to conduct large-scale attacks and forced it to give up its bid to gain territory, reducing the insurgency to fighting to hold onto specific strategic positions from which it could continue to make guerrilla-style attacks.[80] It is true that being reduced to fighting to hold strategic positions is much different from being reduced to an inability to fight, but the gain for the government is nonetheless noteworthy.

The military's accomplishments are reflected in a variety of measurements. For a one-year snapshot, International Crisis Group notes that, "according to army sources, between 7 August 2002 and 29 July 2003 the armed forces and the police killed 1,211 FARC, 379 ELN and 236 paramilitary fighters and captured 2,363 FARC, 556 ELN and 1,202 paramilitaries. In addition, the army states that 1,099 FARC, 337 ELN and 258 paramilitary fighters gave themselves up."[81] The *Economist* provides a similar snapshot, comparing the government's success to that of its foes using figures from Fundación Seguridad y Democracia which show the security forces fighting 72% more battles in 2003 than in 2002, while killing 2,980 members of the irregular armies, compared to losing 523 of its own.[82] Looking at the multi-year effects, the number of FARC combatants dropped about 50% from an estimated peak of 16,000 to 20,000 in the early 2000s to approximately 8,000 to 9,000 in 2012.[83] More important is the amount of

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[78] Ibid., 48.

[79] Echandía and Bechara, "Conducta de la Guerrilla," 32.

[80] Ibid., 3–4.

[81] International Crisis Group, "Colombia: President Uribe's Democratic Security Policy," *Latin America Report,* no.6 (Bogotá/Brussels: International Crisis Group, 13 November 2003), 7, http://www.crisisgroup.org/~/media/Files/latin-america/colombia/06_colombia__uribe_dem__security.pdf.

[82] "Colombia's Security Policy: You Do the Maths," *Economist*, 8 January 2004, http://www.economist.com/node/2335570.

[83] Beittel, *Peace Talks*, 4, 6.

territorial control that the military was able to establish. According to the Colombian MOD, by 2007 the state was in either partial or full control of 90% of Colombian territory, up from an estimated 70% in 2003.[84] Looking at the other side of the coin (FARC presence), the shift was perhaps more dramatic. According to some sources, the FARC maintained a presence in almost 700 *municipios* in 1998, up from 173 a decade earlier.[85] Writing in 2013 at the end of Plan Colombia, James A. Robinson notes that the military's counterinsurgency of the 2000s pushed the FARC "out of half of the [*municipios*] in which it was present in 2002."[86] Furthermore, gains against the FARC allowed the government to establish a police presence in the 169 *municipios* previously lacking any state law enforcement, meaning all 1,099 *municipios* in the country had some form of police representation.[87] The gains against the FARC were mirrored against the ELN, which has lost approximately 60% of its numbers since its peak in the 1990s.[88]

D.   IMPROVEMENTS IN CITIZEN SECURITY

The gains against the insurgents and the increased control of the state over territory led to an improvement in citizen security. First, homicide rates have followed the intensity of conflict in Colombia, so although homicides rose around the year 2000 as the armed conflict intensified, as the military gained success and pushed the insurgents out of more and more areas, the homicide rates fell.[89] Just in case this scenario comes across as a case of an organization fixing a problem it was responsible for creating, it is worth emphasizing that the FARC was the organization that was dedicated to violently overthrowing the democratically elected government and was consciously increasing the

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[84] Ford, *Drug Reduction Goals*, 24.

[85] Farah, "Colombian Rebels Seen Winning War;" Angel Rabasa and Peter Chalk, *Colombian Labyrinth: The Synergy of Drugs and Insurgency and its Implications for Regional Stability* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2001), 46, http://www.rand.org/pubs/monograph_reports/MR1339.html.

[86] James A. Robinson, "Colombia: Another 100 Years of Solitude?," *Current History* 112, no. 751 (February 2013): 43.

[87] Ford, *Drug Reduction Goals*, 45; DeShazo, Primiani, and McLean, *Back from the Brink*, viii.

[88] Beittel, *Peace Talks*, 9.

[89] Echandía and Bechara, "Conducta de la Guerrilla," 45.

violence in pursuit of that goal. Indeed the Pastrana government (1998–2002) had tried during most of its tenure to negotiate peace with the FARC.

Second, as an organization that finances itself through drug trafficking, extortion, and kidnapping, one would expect that as the FARC experienced substantial loses in manpower, territory, and materiel, there would be some effect on its financing activities. A more detailed discussion of crime statistics follows, but the short answer is that we do see a significant drop in these crimes commensurate with the military's counterinsurgent fight.

Citizen security is not something that can be measured directly, but it is possible to gain a sense of it from examining a range of crime/security data. Choosing which data to examine is its own difficult task, especially in consideration of the military-specific nature of the question at hand. The number of homicides, burglaries, and vehicle thefts are considered a good proxy for measuring broader crime/security, so these issues are given emphasis here.[90] Other issues also have direct relevance to insurgent activities, as well as to the protection of life and physical and material integrity, so those will be addressed also.

Looking at crime statistics, we can see security improvement over the course of Plan Colombia, though it is a mixed picture, whether we look at the three "proxy" crimes or at a broader range of offenses such as kidnappings, sexual assaults, and terrorist acts. Nonetheless there is still a distinct positive trend to the security environment in Colombia that correlates strongly with the activities of the military. June Beittel of the Congressional Research Service gives the short description this way, "according to U.S. State Department figures, kidnappings in Colombia declined by 83%, homicides by 40%, and terrorist attacks by 76% between 2002 through 2008."[91] We are certainly interested in the homicide figure, as one of the noted proxies, but the dramatic decline in

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[90] United Nations Development Programme, *Citizen Security*, 187.

[91] June S. Beittel, *Colombia: Background, U.S. Relations, and Congressional Interest,* (CRS Report No. RL32250) (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 28 November 2012), 4, https://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/row/RL32250.pdf.

kidnappings and terrorist attacks point to improved protection of life and physical integrity.

Looking at the homicide numbers more closely, from 2002 to 2013 the number of homicides dropped steadily from 28,837 to 15,419. Only two years (2011 and 2012) saw an increase over the previous year, but this increase was slight and was succeeded by a new low in 2013. Despite the impressive downward trend, it's worth noting that the murder rate per 100,000 inhabitants is still a staggering 32.7, meaning there is considerable work to be done to continue the good start that has been achieved.[92]

To give some perspective to the homicide numbers just mentioned, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime reports that for 2012 the average homicide rate in South America was 16.1 murders per 100,000 inhabitants. Venezuela was the only South American country with a higher rate than Colombia, registering 53.7. At the other end of the spectrum, the murder rate in Chile was 3.1. Central America was noticeably more dangerous, having an average homicide rate of 34.3, with a minimum of 8.5 in Costa Rica and a staggering maximum of 90.4 in Honduras. Looking outside Latin America, the United States recorded 4.7 murders per 100,000 in 2012, while Western Europe averaged 0.7.[93]

Mass homicides (massacres) also decreased markedly during Plan Colombia. This is, however, a sort of mixed indicator because the massacre numbers are more closely associated with the paramilitaries than with the insurgents or military. The decrease in massacres is related to the Colombian military's success, but indirectly so, since military success against the FARC meant the paramilitaries had less reason to continue their own

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[92] Ministerio de Defensa, República de Colombia, "Logros de la Política Integral de Seguridad y Defensa para la Prosperidad – PISDP" [Accomplishments of the policy for security and defense for prosperity-PISDP], MinDefensa, Ministerio de Defensa Nacional, November 2014, 10, http://www.mindefensa.gov.co/irj/go/km/docs/Mindefensa/Documentos/descargas/estudios%20sectoriales/info_estadistica/Logros_Sector_Defensa.pdf; Ministerio de Defensa, República de Colombia, "Logros de la Política de Consolidación de la Seguridad Democrática—PCSD" [Accomplishments of the policy for consolidation of democratic security-PCSD], MinDefensa, Ministerio de Defensa Nacional, June 2010, 10, www.mindefensa.gov.co/irj/go/km/docs/Mindefensa/Documentos/descargas/estudios%20sectoriales/info_estadistica/Logros%20de%20Politica%20CSD%20Junio%202010.pdf.

[93] "Intentional homicide count and rate per 100,000 population, by country/territory (2000–2012)," Global Study on Homicide, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, http://www.unodc.org/gsh/en/data.html.

anti-leftist campaign of terror. Peter DeShazo, Tanya Primiani, and Phillip McLean give this explanation: "The number of massacres and persons killed in massacres (defined normally as 4 or more associated deaths) rose precipitously from 1997 to 2001, closely associated with increased paramilitary activity, and dropped just as dramatically after that year."[94] The downward trend continued for a while, but leveled out after 2007, and in 2013 there were 104 massacre victims in Colombia.[95] That is still a large number, but it's down approximately 91% from the peak in 2000.

After homicides, the next category for our security proxies, vehicle thefts, shows some interesting mixed results. Automobile thefts declined steadily from 17,303 thefts in 2002 to 8,099 thefts in 2010, then made a small jump before settling back to 8,934 in 2013. Although there are a couple of bumps, carjackings show an even more impressive decrease, starting at 1,436 in 2002, and sitting at 470 in 2013. Motorcycle thefts, disappointingly, show distinctly the opposite trend: after decreasing moderately from 12,974 in 2002, thefts have increased considerably in the last seven years, with 23,200 occurrences in 2013. Combining automobiles and motorcycles yields a small initial decrease followed by a noticeable upward movement. Of note, both individually and combined, the trends show improvement during the first few years of the military's concerted counterinsurgency efforts, then the gains level off or reverse.[96]

Considering the economic nature of vehicle thefts and the difficulties the Colombian government has had with following military success with civilian development, the trend reversal is perhaps not too surprising, though the dramatic nature of the motorcycle theft increase is intriguing and troubling.

Looking at the last of the three proxies, burglary is the most negative. The progression is not smooth, but as expected, there is an initial decrease. The decrease is small though, and only lasts from 2003 to 2005. After that, there is a notable upward trend to burglaries, with a 32% overall increase between 2002 and 2013.[97] Another crime

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[94] DeShazo, Primiani, and McLean, *Back from the Brink*, 18.

[95] Ministerio de Defensa, "Logros PISDP,"12.

[96] Ministerio de Defensa, "Logros PCSD," 21, 27; Ministerio de Defensa, "Logros PISDP," 21–23, 29.

[97] Ministerio de Defensa, "Logros PCSD," 23; Ministerio de Defensa, "Logros PISDP,"25.

set that is not part of the proxies but that is closely related to burglary is personal thefts. These include both violent and non-violent acts such as purse-snatchings, pickpocketing, holdups, and muggings.[98] Personal thefts also decrease a little from 2002 to 2004, following expectations and the trend of just about every other crime, but thereafter personal thefts go on a steady and steep rise such that the 2013 figure is 180% above 2002's.[99]

As noted above, certain trends outside the general security proxies are also worth examining because they are meaningful for citizen security. Kidnappings are notable both for the relation to a person's physical integrity and for the significance they have as a primary FARC activity. Kidnappings are also notable for their precipitous decrease following the success of the military. Kidnappings dropped from a total of 2,882 in 2002, to a low of 213 in 2009, then have held at about 300 per year after that, yielding approximately a 90% decrease.[100]

Extortion, another FARC mainstay, actually rose somewhat from 2002 to 2004, but then dropped noticeably through 2008. Since 2008, extortion has risen, and from 2012 to 2013 it more than doubled, which places the number at just over double the 2002 figure.[101]

Terrorist acts have followed a similar trend to extortion, creating a sort of "U" shape from 2002 to 2013 (as mentioned earlier in the section on civilian attacks), though thankfully the right side of the U is still about 46% lower than the 2002 high.[102]

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[98] Policía Nacional de Colombia, Ministerio de Defensa Nacional, República de Colombia, "Hurto a Personas" [Robbery from persons], Recomendaciones de Seguridad, Policía Nacional de Colombia, http://www.policia.gov.co/portal/page/portal/UNIDADES_POLICIALES/Direcciones_tipo_Operativas/Direccion_Seguridad_Ciudadana/Planes_de_Seguridad/Recomendaciones_de_seguridad/hurto_personas.

[99] Ministerio de Defensa, "Logros PISDP," 27; Ministerio de Defensa, "Logros PCSD," 25.

[100] Ministerio de Defensa, "Logros PISDP," 15; Ministerio de Defensa, "Logros PCSD," 14.

[101] Ministerio de Defensa, "Logros PISDP," 30; Ministerio de Defensa, "Logros PCSD," 28.

[102] Ministerio de Defensa, "Logros PISDP," 37; Ministerio de Defensa, "Logros PCSD," 30. The official government definition of terrorism is slightly broader than the one used by Grupo de Memoria, mostly in the inclusion of infrastructure as a target of terror attacks. The numbers in the MOD publications also include all terror attacks in the country, not just those specifically related to the armed conflict. The MOD numbers are therefore considerably higher than those referenced by Grupo de Memoria, but the trend, including the difference between 2002 and 2013 is almost the same.

Though not specifically related to the counterinsurgency, sexual assaults are very relevant to citizen security and they have, sadly, risen almost every year since 2003, starting at 3,225 and moving to 11,592 in 2013.[103] Domestic violence exhibits a similar rise, more than doubling from 2005 to 2013.[104]

Overall, the crime index as presented by the Colombian Ministry of Defense (which includes the crimes mentioned above as well as a few others, but excludes domestic violence and sexual offenses) is a disappointing "W" shape. (Note that the crime index is presented by the Ministry of Defense because the police in Colombia fall within the Ministry of Defense.) The years 2002 and 2003 show above average but decreasing crime; 2004–2010 move up and down, but show below average crime; and 2011–2013 jump back up above average, with 2013 actually having a higher crime index than 2002.[105]

The irregular W of the crime index provides a useful way to visualize the above statistics: following a peak of violence around 2000, corresponding roughly to the height of insurgent power and military/paramilitary/insurgent conflict, the policies of Plan Colombia, which were focused on the military, precipitated a dramatic drop in crime. All crime levels dropped from 2002–2004, except extortion (which fell after 2004) and sexual offenses and domestic violence, which have essentially only risen. Unfortunately, after considerable gains in the early- to mid-2000s, crime rates generally leveled off, or in some cases rose. The rise in the criminal index in recent years is driven mostly by terrorist acts, motorcycle thefts, personal thefts, and extortion. Motorcycle and personal thefts lie outside the purview of the military, even in the internal security role it fills in Colombia (the same is true of domestic violence and sexual offenses, the other skyrocketing crimes), but acts of terrorism and even extortion are within the military's scope. Importantly, the stagnation and reversal of crime is an expected outcome when the state fails to consolidate its gains with civilian institutions, as is discussed later.

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[103] Ministerio de Defensa, "Logros PISDP," 19; Ministerio de Defensa, "Logros PCSD," 19.

[104] Ministerio de Defensa, "Logros PISDP," 32.

[105] Ibid., 40.

In addition to the crime rates just mentioned, citizen security is also threatened in other ways, with the forced displacement of citizens perhaps being the most prominent in Colombia. The cumulative number of Colombians who have been forced to flee their homes due to conflict over the past three decades is more than 5.5 million.[106] Displaced persons have generally been seeking to escape the violence of conflict between the military, the insurgents, and the paramilitaries, but more recently, the criminal gangs who have moved in to fill the void left by the withdrawal of the other groups have become the main source of forced displacements.[107] Maria Derks-Normandin indicates that, "forced displacement has also been linked to economic activities and associated land-grabbing, in particular for mining and resource extraction and mass scale oil palm cultivation and other agriculture activities."[108] Derks-Normandin also notes that an increase in displacements is to be expected during "military activities to combat guerrillas and end the conflict,"[109] thus the long-term goal of ending one of the primary sources of displacements makes matters worse in the short term.[110] This may account for the spike around 2001, as well as other portions of the displacement numbers; however, the more or less level nature of the annual displacement figures since the late 1990s indicates a large, continuing problem for citizen security. The observation, though, that the cause of displacement has now shifted away from military-type actions toward criminal activity lends credence to the idea that the military succeeded in its role within Plan Colombia (reducing the insurgent threat and open warfare that displaced citizens) but that the efforts of the government to solidify and consolidate the military gains have been lacking (allowing space for criminal elements to take over, which causes displacement).

The enduring nature of forced displacement, as well as the recent increases in terrorism and extortion, point out that there are failures in Colombia's security system. Furthermore, despite the often-plummeting crime rates of the early- to mid-2000s, even

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[106] Maria Derks-Normandin, *Building Peace in the Midst of Conflict: Improving Security and Finding Durable Solutions to Displacement in Colombia*, (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 2014), 7–8.

[107] Ibid., 8.

[108] Ibid.

[109] Ibid., 1.

[110] Ibid.

the lowest rates never achieved an acceptable level of security. Nonetheless, the setbacks just described do not mean the military efforts at improving security were a failure. Military action was not intended to establish total peace; the military was expected to provide a secure space in which the rest of the government could operate so as to produce the economic and social security that draws people away from the criminality that harms citizen security.[111] International Crisis Group explains the concept this way: "It is standard counter-insurgency doctrine that physical control of territory can be sustained only if military action is followed by the positive benefits of a broader state presence. The Colombian armed forces have increasingly been able to achieve the former; the Uribe administration's 2007 security consolidation strategy recognized the necessity of the latter."[112] A major source of the continuing trouble in Colombia is the inability of the Colombian government to follow the military gains with effective social and economic development, even if the necessity to do so was recognized.[113]

Social and economic development are part of the build phase of the familiar counterinsurgency strategy of clear, hold, and build.[114] The broad-brush idea behind Plan Colombia was that the military would retake control of an area from the illegal armed groups (clear); once control was established, local military and police forces (*campesino* soldiers and *carabineros*) would provide security to the citizens (hold); and this would allow the state to reestablish and deliver public institutions and services (build).[115] The clear part was reasonably successful, the hold and build portions have been less so. Although the military was able to successfully gain control of much territory, the

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[111] Marks, "Model Counterinsurgency," 54.

[112] International Crisis Group, "Colombia: Making Military Progress Pay Off," *Latin America Briefing,* no.17 (Bogotá/Brussels: International Crisis Group, 29 April 2008), 10, http://www.crisisgroup.org/~/media/Files/latin-america/colombia/b17_colombia_making_military_progress_pay_off.pdf.

[113] Vanda Felbab-Brown et al., *Assessment of the Implementation of the United States Government's Support for Plan Colombia's Illicit Crop Reduction Components* (Washington, DC: United States Agency for International Development, 17 April 2009), v.

[114] Department of the Army, *Insurgencies and Countering Insurgencies* (FM 3-24) (Washington, DC: Headquarters, Department of the Army, 13 May 2014), 9-3, 9-8, http://fas.org/irp/doddir/army/fm3-24.pdf; Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Stability Operations* (JP 3-07) (Washington, DC: 29 September 2011), II-12, http://dtic.mil/doctrine/new_pubs/jp3_07.pdf.

[115] Marks, "Model Counterinsurgency," 54.

Colombian state had considerable difficulty stabilizing and developing these areas. Frequently the inhabitants did not trust the government, did not trust that the government would remain, or the government could not get non-security organizations to send people to the newly controlled areas because the prospective employees feared for their own security.[116] Lamenting this trend, the United States Agency for International Development offered this critique: "The civilian follow-up to military clearing and holding operations is frequently slow, uncoordinated, lacking resources, and suffers from a lack of commitment and ownership at the highest levels of the Colombian government."[117] The lack of an effective build phase is a severe problem for the country in almost all regards, and it is certainly a great detriment to security. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, an important part of full citizen security is the development of a government and citizenry that are encouraged to, as well as capable of, foregoing violence and crime in pursuit of their goals and needs.[118]

E.   CONCLUSION

The absence of widespread and successful state or institution building following the military's clearing and holding efforts is a negative element for citizen security, but the absence does not affect the lessons to be learned about the military's effects on citizen security. Long plagued by conflict, in the late 1990s, Colombia found itself facing skyrocketing violence and crime, as a well several strong illegal armed groups, including insurgencies and paramilitaries. Among these, the strongest was the FARC, an insurgent group that aimed to violently overthrow the state and that was gaining the military capacity to do so. These groups created considerable insecurity for Colombians through a wide range of actions from assassination to kidnapping to extortion to indiscriminate attacks on civilian targets. Improving security required the state to both degrade the ability of the illegal armed groups to carry out their crimes, and to re-establish its own presence throughout the country in order to provide continuing security and development

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[116] Derks-Normandin, *Building Peace*, 20.

[117] Felbab-Brown et al., *Assessment of the Implementation*, v.

[118] United Nations Development Programme, *Citizen Security*, 5.

services. Improved funding, equipment, and manpower for the military, as well as reforms in training and operations allowed the Colombian military to significantly weaken the FARC and other illegal armed groups, and to regain large amounts of territory for the state, thus leading to an improvement in citizen security.

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III. CRITIQUES OF THE ARGUMENT THAT THE MILITARY IMPROVED CITIZEN SECURITY

While many scholars agree with the conclusion that the Colombian military aided citizen security during Plan Colombia, many others do not. This chapter addresses some of these critiques. We begin by addressing a structural critique of my argument, namely that the national-level data used is not sufficient to establish a causal link between military actions and improved security. We then address the two main critiques of Plan Colombia's military actions. The first is that the military committed its own human rights abuses and therefore actually diminished citizen security rather than aiding it. The second is that Plan Colombia helped elite interests while harming rural and poor Colombians. These critiques are not baseless; it is true that there were problems associated directly with the military and Plan Colombia. That said, the value of the achievements and the overall balance of effects show that the military provided a useful, and even necessary, first step toward improving citizen security.

A. LOCAL VERSUS NATIONAL DATA

The concept of clear, hold, and build with which the last chapter ended suggests a twist on the way the security data just examined should be viewed: if the military, whose main job was to clear areas and secondarily to help hold them, contributed to improved citizen security in Colombia, one would expect that areas that were successfully cleared would experience a differential effect on crime when compared to areas that the military was unable to clear or areas that lacked the criminal groups to begin with. In other words, the national-level data just discussed should be disaggregated to the local level in order to truly draw a causal connection between the actions of the military and changes in citizen security. Knowing that the military had success in clearing some areas of the country and that the country as a whole experienced a decrease in crime concurrent with the clearing actions and consistent with the goals of the actions, still leaves open many alternate explanations for why violence and crime may have decreased. For instance, one could question whether the improvement was due to a change in the economy or the police force or the government. The best course of action would be to collect local-level data for

the crime statistics (e.g. at the *municipio* level), as well as local-level data on where the military operated and how much control, if any, it gained in those areas. The two datasets could then be evaluated against each other, and hopefully isolated from any exogenous factors, to determine any causal connection between the military's success and the drop in crime.

Unfortunately, finding the datasets to do this sort of rigorous evaluation, or finding other studies that have done similar comparisons, is difficult. In terms of data there are several good sources on conflict and non-conflict killings in Colombia, disaggregated by location (including Centro de Recursos para el Análisis de Conflictos [CERAC], Centro de Investigación y Educación Popular—Programa por la Paz [CINEP/PPP], and Colombia's National Institute of Legal Medicine and Forensic Science.)[119] Unfortunately, finding similarly detailed data on other crimes, or on the changing geography of government control of territory, is much more difficult.[120]

In terms of existing studies, the causal sources of the drop in crime and the causal effects of the military efforts are understudied. As Javier Pérez confirms, "Although there are, in fact, a large number of studies on crime in Colombia, rather less research has been done on the causal effects of crime control policies."[121] Many authors do mention the decreased crime in Colombia with reference to the government efforts to retake control of national territory, but causal connections are rarely made. Furthermore, the reference is generally only meant as part of the background to the topic actually being studied. Occasionally, a causal connection is asserted, but these claims are based on the same national level data I use in this thesis, and they are typically made in products whose source, such as the U.S. government, can be assumed to be biased toward viewing Plan

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[119] CERAC's database has been unavailable for several months due to updating, but the three sources can be found at the following locations:
CERAC—http://www.cerac.org.co/es/recursos/datosconflictoscolombia/,
CINEP—http://www.nocheyniebla.org/node/9,
Institute of Legal Medicine—http://www.medicinalegal.gov.co/en/forensis1.

[120] It should be noted that some of this data might be found in Spanish language sources that I have been unable to find due to my currently limited Spanish skills.

[121] Gerson Javier Pérez V., "Goals Met or Just Empty Promises?: First Version of the Democratic Security Policy in Colombia" (Working Paper No. 700, Banco de la Republica, Bogotá, Colombia, 2012), 3.

Colombia in a positive light. USAID provides a typical example, declaring, "Plan Colombia has achieved significant advances. Its greatest accomplishment has been the dramatic improvements in security in the country and the suppression of illegally armed groups, including the FARC, ELN, and paramilitary groups."[122]

Most authors do not claim a causal connection, but many—even those who seem to take a negative view of Plan Colombia—imply the connection. Ana M. Arjona illustrates this problem with the data as she provides background for her work exploring how violence and social order in Colombia affect each other: "Alvaro Uribe won the presidential elections in 2002 with a proposal to crush the guerrillas by military means. From 2002 on, the country saw a steady recovery of areas that were under guerrilla control, and violence decreased by most counts while concerns about human rights abuses by the state also increased."[123] Samir Elhawary provides another illustration: "Plan Colombia and the 'democratic security' policy succeeded in enhancing the security of the state vis-à-vis the threat of insurgency and reached a negotiated settlement for the demobilization of the paramilitaries. This led to a reduction in violence, but this has been limited spatially to the main urban and economic centers of the country, and has been discriminatory in its focus."[124] Elhawary's article is arguing that Colombian efforts at stabilization "have privileged the security of the state and its allies at the expense of the effective protection of the civilian population,"[125] but he still implies that the overall effect of Plan Colombia was a positive reduction in violence.

The lack of established causal connections is not for a lack of research on Colombia, but rather a result of the emphasis of most of that research. Colombian society and politics have both suffered from extensive insecurity for decades, if not centuries. The conflict there has generated some very extensive and detailed studies, but the particular question that this thesis explores is not well addressed. For instance, a team led

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[122] Felbab-Brown et al., *Assessment of the Implementation*, iii.

[123] Ana M. Arjona, "Social Order in Civil War," (Ph.D. dissertation, Yale University, 2010), 148, http://search.proquest.com/docview/848633133?accountid=12702.

[124] Elhawary, "Security for Whom?" 402.

[125] Ibid., 388.

by Stathis N. Kalyvas out of Yale University (which includes Arjona) has produced a great amount of local-level data related to the conflict, but their data is not of much use for studying the effects of the military on citizen security during Plan Colombia. Their work is focused on creating theoretical constructs to explain how civil war violence and individuals affect each other, and the data does not allow for the evaluation of military actions with regards to changes in crime. A case in point is Arjona's dissertation on violence and social order noted above. She collects and analyzes considerable local-level data on violence, but it is not useful here because it is not correlated with where the military met with success or failure, nor does it address crime in the terms of this thesis, nor does it even mention Plan Colombia.

In another example of detailed conflict research that does not answer the question of local-level effects, Jorge Restrepo and Michael Spagat make use of the CINEP database to examine the effects of Plan Colombia under President Uribe, and they conclude that "it is possible to measure what is going on in terms of violent attacks, armed clashes and both civilian and combatant deaths and injuries. Such metrics, analyzed rigorously, show incomplete but nonetheless unmistakable evidence that the Uribe government has had significant success in fighting the guerrillas while reducing civilian deaths."[126] Despite the detailed data, Restrepo and Spagat only analyze trends at the national level. They justify this partly by explaining that although "conflict conditions vary considerably by location, our findings are very strong, so the national trends we identify should generally reflect those of most regions."[127]

Javier Pérez has published two papers that perhaps get the closest to putting all the pieces together to determine the links between Plan Colombia and citizen security, but he is not directly focused on the military, and worse, his methodology is unconvincing. In "Plan Colombia's Onset: Effects on Homicides and Violent Deaths," Pérez analyzes the effects of Plan Colombia from 1999–2001 on homicides and other

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[126] Jorge A. Restrepo and Michael Spagat, "Colombia's Tipping Point?," *Survival: Global Politics and Strategy* 47, no. 2 (2005): 132, doi: 10.1080/00396330500156602.

[127] Ibid., 134.

types of violent deaths.[128] The other paper, "Goals Met or Just Empty Promises? First Version of the Democratic Security Policy in Colombia," analyzes the effects of Plan Colombia from 2002–2006 (specifically President Uribe's Democratic Security Plan) on crime generally in Colombia. In the first paper, Pérez observes that the main focus of Plan Colombia during the early years was the eradication of coca. He therefore seeks "to analyze the causation between reducing coca cultivation and violent deaths," a connection that might arise thanks to the increased economic and military resources dedicated to the eradication project.[129] His analysis is centered on the differences in homicide rates in regions where a high percentage of coca crops were destroyed versus in regions where a low percentage of crops were destroyed (measured in hectares of coca plants, not in amount of coca produced).[130] Since the eradication efforts were led by the military, this study has the potential to reveal a link between military efforts and changes in homicide rates (Pérez does not address other types of crime in which this thesis is interested, but the homicide connection would be a start). Unfortunately, Pérez does not explain very well why coca plant destruction should affect homicide rates, especially considering his observations that (1) the intent of Plan Colombia's coca eradication was not dealing with crime; and that (2) although the number of hectares of coca plants decreased, "cocaine producers were able to produce virtually the same amount of coca leaf, and the corresponding amount in cocaine production even with only half of the land they had originally had."[131]

The apparently weak link between the independent and dependent variables in this study seems to be borne out by the results of Pérez's analysis, which find no significant effect on the reduction of homicides overall, but a reduction in homicides for rural men and an increase for urban women.[132] Although a reduction in homicides for rural men as a result of coca eradication might make sense due to the presence of extra

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[128] Gerson Javier Pérez V., "Plan Colombia's Onset: Effects on Homicides and Violent Deaths," *Revista de Economía del Rosario* 17, no. 1 (2014): 121.

[129] Ibid., 152.

[130] Ibid.

[131] Pérez, "Goals Met or Just Empty Promises?," 7; Pérez, "Plan Colombia's Onset," 125, 152.

[132] Pérez, "Plan Colombia's Onset," 136–140, 152.

government forces in rural areas, the link between eradication (which took place in rural areas) and an increase in urban homicides of women only does not make sense. Without further explanation of the link between eradication and homicides, it is hard to trust that the results are not being affected by some hidden variable.

The other paper by Pérez similarly suffers from questions concerning the relationship between the independent and dependent variables. In "Goals Met or Empty Promises" Pérez asserts that rates dropped across a range of crimes in Colombia due to increased efforts at fighting illegal armed groups financially.[133] New government efforts starting in 2002 were aimed at fighting the illegal armed groups by seizing their financial assets. The seizures were intended to weaken the ability of the groups to fight, as well as to provide additional funds to the government to compensate victims and society.[134] Pérez examines a range of crimes and finds that Plan Colombia had a substantial effect on crime in rural areas, where the illegal armed groups where concentrated, but crime in urban areas was not significantly reduced, since government efforts did not address common criminals.[135] Pérez's paper is one of the few that attempts to address the wide range of crimes that affect citizen security, and his theory that the legislative/financial fight had an impact on security is worth consideration (as is the assertion that reductions in crime benefitted rural areas more), but the idea that the only significant change that affected the government's fight against illegal armed groups was the increased seizure of financial assets opposes most of the existing literature. Most authors observe an important change in the military actions of the Colombian government and point to the military changes as the source of changing crime rates. Disagreement with prevailing theories does not suggest error, but it does require a thorough explanation. This explanation is lacking in "Goals Met or Just Empty Promises?" and so once again the results are difficult to accept. Thus, although Pérez does attempt to establish the causal sources for changes in crime during Plan Colombia, and to do so with detailed, local-

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[133] Pérez, "Goals Met or Just Empty Promises?," 8.

[134] Ibid., 16.

[135] Ibid., 31.

level data, the answers are unsatisfactory and this thesis is left continuing to rely on national trends.

B. SOME SECURITY LOSSES DURING PLAN COLOMBIA

The security trends described in the previous chapter showed the important gains in security resulting achieved by the military, but there have also been some distinct setbacks to citizen security related specifically to the military's actions. In particular, the military has been associated with human rights abuses and collusion with the paramilitaries.[136] Such actions counter the gains made in other areas and must be weighed in the balance to determine the overall impact of the military on citizen security. The negative actions of the military can be examined in two ways. First, crimes committed by the military add to the crime rates of the country instead of reducing them (straightforward conceptually if not empirically). Second, the effect of military crimes on the legitimacy of both the military and the government must be considered, because a loss of legitimacy detracts from the government's ability to provide security, as well as other services.

Possibly the most egregious abuse by the military during Plan Colombia was the practice of intentionally killing civilians and then dressing them up to look like insurgents so that they could be counted as enemy killed. This practice, known as "false positives," has a long history in Colombia, but the largest number of violations occurred from 2004 to 2008.[137] The estimates of the number of civilians murdered vary widely. In his report on Colombia, Philip Alston, the UN's Special Rapporteur on Extrajudicial, Summary, or Arbitrary Executions, notes a low estimate of 995 murders (between July 2002 and June 2007) and a high estimate of 1,486 (between July 2002 and June 2008).[138] Other groups provide still higher estimates, though all seem to agree that the task of estimating the

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[136] Isacson, "Colombia: Don't Call it a Model."

[137] Philip Alston, *Report of the Special Rapporteur on Extrajudicial, Summary, or Arbitrary Executions, Philip Alston* (A/HRC/14/24/Add.2) (UN General Assembly, Human Rights Council, 31 March 2010), 8, http://ap.ohchr.org/documents/dpage_e.aspx?m=96.

[138] Alston, *Report of the Special Rapporteur*, 9.

number of civilians killed illegally by the military is difficult owing to questions of how incidents are reported and how they are tracked and counted.

To see the direct effect of the false positives on security, we use the numbers from the Colombian Commission of Jurists (which estimates 1,902 civilians illegally killed between July 2002 and June 2008) and add these false positive numbers to the number of homicides (by year). Doing so does not change the steep downward trend of the homicide rate already discussed.[139] Even during the worst year, 2007, with an estimated 519 false positives, the added deaths only increase the murder rate by 1.2/100,000 inhabitants (from 39.2 to 40.4/100,000).[140] So from the numerical perspective (callous though it may be), the false positive activities of the military did not outweigh the benefits of the military success concerning citizen security.

The more difficult, and important, aspect to measure is the impact of the murders on the legitimacy of the military. The effect of the actions on the military's legitimacy is so important because the military cannot fulfill its job of protecting the population and defeating the insurgency if it is perceived as illegitimate. The population will not support an illegitimate military with indirect assistance (such as taxes) or direct assistance (such as intelligence). Furthermore, if the population perceives the military as illegitimate, they are more likely to support the insurgency. A loss of legitimacy is also significant because legitimacy in this context is based on trust, and trust is difficult to build. Ending the practice of false positives is relatively quick and easy compared to the long road of rebuilding trust with the community.

Measuring the impact of the false positives on the military's legitimacy should be addressed both in terms of loss of support for the military and increase in support for the non-state actors vying for social control. Surprisingly, the revelations of the practice of false positives only affected public opinion of the military slightly, decreasing its

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[139] Comisión Colombiana de Juristas, "Ejecuciones Extrajudiciales, Homicidios Sociopolíticos, y Desapariciones Forzadas, Total de Víctimas Muertas y Porcentaje de Autoría por Presuntos Autores, Según Periodos Julio de 1996 a Junio de 2010" [Extrajudicial executions, sociopolitical murders, and forced disappearances: Total victims killed and percentages by suspected responsible party, from July 1996 to June 2010] (15 March 2012), http://www.coljuristas.org/documentos/cifras/cif_2012-05-04_01.pdf.

[140] Comisión Colombiana de Juristas, "Ejecuciones Extrajudiciales" [Extrajudicial executions].

approval rating from 79% to 77%.[141] This level of support is still quite high and does not indicate a lack of legitimacy that would prevent the military from fulfilling its proper role as a protector of the nation.

Just as the military did not lose legitimacy, the FARC did not gain any. The approval rating of the FARC has fluctuated between 1 and 5% since 2000 (with an average of roughly 2.5%), with the highest ratings coming at a three points in 2005 and 2006. In late 2008, when the false positive scandal broke, the FARC's approval rating actually decreased, from a 3% favorable public opinion in August down to a 1% favorable opinion in December. Essentially the FARC has never had any significant legitimacy and the violations of the military did not change this.[142]

These points are not meant to support or condone the murders committed by the military, which are all the more abhorrent for being committed by an institution whose reason for being is to protect the very citizens it victimized. The intent is only to show that for the nation as a whole the detriments to security caused by the military did not outweigh the improvements.

One last consideration when evaluating the changes in levels of security (and the actions or institutions that created those changes) is that not all crimes should be weighted equally. There is no single, absolute measure of seriousness for crimes, but societies across the world do attribute differing levels of severity to different crimes and there is remarkable cross-cultural consistency in the relative rankings of the most serious crimes.[143] Marvin Wolfgang et al. also observe that, "implicit judgments about the severity of crime are imbedded in our social institutions," meaning, for instance, that our laws are set up in such a manner as to explicitly rank certain crimes as worse than

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[141] Adriaan Alsema, "Support for Colombia Military and Police Sinks after Series of Scandals," News, Colombia Reports, 6 March 2014, http://colombiareports.co/support-colombia-military-plummets-series-scandals/.

[142] Gallup Colombia, "Gallup Poll, # 99, Colombia, Febrero 2014" (Document No. C 0526-050021100), Gallup Colombia Ltda., http://colombiareports.co/support-colombia-military-plummets-series-scandals/.

[143] Stelios Stylianou, "Measuring Crime Seriousness Perceptions: What Have We Learned and What Else do We Want to Know," *Journal of Criminal Justice* 31 (2003), 45.

others.[144] Throughout the literature on the seriousness of criminal acts, the most serious ratings are given to crimes that cause bodily injury, followed next by those that cause property loss or damage (matching with our definition of citizen security as the protection of life and of people's physical and material integrity.)[145] In the case of this thesis, which is evaluating the military, greater importance should also be given to those crimes over which military actions are most likely to have an effect. Based on these considerations, the most serious indicators for security under consideration would be murder, kidnapping, extortion, and theft, in that order. Based on this criteria, even though extortion and theft have risen overall since the start of Plan Colombia, the precipitous decline of the more important murder and kidnapping numbers leads to the conclusion that the military's participation in Plan Colombia aided security.

C.   PLAN COLOMBIA AS A TOOL OF THE ELITE

In addition to the idea that certain military actions offset some of the security gains obtained, another critique of Plan Colombia is that the actions of the state helped elite interests while harming certain other groups, especially rural residents and the poor. Critics point to the enduring high level of income distribution inequality, the disproportionate effects of displacement on indigenous and afro-Colombian groups, and the economic benefit that certain groups have derived from the displacement of others.[146] The statistics do show these problems to be quite large. Colombia has the tenth most unequal income distribution in the world, as measured by the Gini index.[147] Land distribution is also highly unequal: 1.15% of the Colombian population owns 52.2% of the land.[148] Indigenous groups and afro-Colombians are indeed disproportionately

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[144] Marvin E. Wolfgang et al., *The National Survey of Crime Severity* (Washington, DC: GPO, 1985), v, http://www.bjs.gov/content/pub/pdf/nscs.pdf. For one example of how laws rank crimes by degree of severity, see the Oregon Criminal Justice Commission's Crime Seriousness Scale at http://arcweb.sos.state.or.us/pages/rules/oars_200/oar_213/213_017.html.

[145] Stylianou, "Measuring Crime Seriousness Perceptions," 42.

[146] Derks-Normandin, *Building Peace*, 10; Forrest Hylton, "Plan Colombia: The Measure of Success," *Brown Journal of World Affairs* 17, no. 1 (Fall/Winter 2010): 108.

[147] "The World Factbook: Distribution of Family Income—Gini Index," Central Intelligence Agency, https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/rankorder/2172rank.html.

[148] Beittel, *Colombia: Background*, 3.

affected by displacement: indigenous people and afro-Colombians account for 13.4% of the national population, but they made up 44% of new internally displaced persons in 2012.[149] The displacement numbers themselves are tremendously high, with hundreds of thousands of newly displaced persons each year, and the total number of displacements since 1985 reaching close to six million.[150]

The problem with the above critique is two-fold. First, the disproportionate harm done to the poor in Colombia is not an outgrowth of Plan Colombia; it is an outgrowth of the larger Colombian conflict, as well as a host of other historical conditions. As Michael Chernick pointed out shortly after the start of Plan Colombia, "Colombia's tortured descent into lawlessness was the direct result of more than fifty years of internal armed conflict."[151] Even the long-standing conflict itself was the result of enduring problems. Virginia Bouvier explains that the FARC "was one of many Latin American guerrilla groups that emerged in the 1960s in response to widespread poverty and tremendous economic and social inequity.[152] The second problem with the critique is that Plan Colombia, the strategy, should not be equated with the corrupt, illegal, and/or immoral acts of those involved in implementing or following the strategy. To address the first issue, it is useful to look at the long-term context of Plan Colombia, starting before its implementation and extending through to the current day. Plan Colombia was announced in September 1999 by President Pastrana.[153] Forced displacement was a huge problem well before 1999; 809,000 Colombians were forcibly displaced from 1985 through

[149] Derks-Normandin, *Building Peace*, 10.

[150] Consultoría para los Derechos Humanos y el Desplazamiento, "Numero de Personas Desplazadas a Nivel Nacional y Año de Llegada" [Number of persons displaced nationwide by year], Estadísticas Históricas De Desplazamiento, Consultoría para los Derechos Humanos y el Desplazamiento, http://www.codhes.org/index.php?option=com_si&type=1.

[151] Marc W. Chernick, "Colombia: Does Injustice Cause Violence?," in *What Justice? Whose Justice? Fighting for Fairness in Latin America*, ed. Susan Eva Eckstein and Timothy P. Wickham-Crowley (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 185.

[152] Virginia Bouvier, "Land, Conflict, and Peace in Colombia: An Interview with USIP's Virginia Bouvier," United States Institute for Peace, 10 April 2013, http://www.usip.org/publications/land-conflict-and-peace-in-colombia.

[153] DeShazo, Primiani, and McLean, *Back from the Brink*, 9; Beittel, *Peace Talks*, 4.

1995.[154] From 1996 through 1998, the yearly figure of displaced persons jumped dramatically, reaching 308,000 in 1998 (the year before Plan Colombia was announced).[155] The number of newly displaced persons has remained persistently high since that time, with an average from 1999 through 2012 of 296,594 people displaced each year, though there has been a downward trend since 2008.[156]

Likewise, Colombia has long been a highly unequal country. Data on Colombia's Gini index is spotty before 1999, but both the World Bank and the United Nation's Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean agree that it fluctuated in the .5–.6 range between 1980 and 1999, and that the same trend has continued since. Importantly, both also agree that the Gini has been improving since 1999, if slowly. Even more significantly, the disaggregated numbers of the UN show that the Gini for rural Colombians has been falling faster and more steadily than for the nation as a whole.[157]

Violence, too, was an extreme problem before Plan Colombia was put into place. The United Nations Statistics Division shows that from 1995 to 1999, the homicide rate was between 60.1 and 71.8 per 100,000 inhabitants. From 1999 to 2002, the homicide rate grew to 70.2, but then as described in the section on crime, the homicide rate began a rapid and steady decline.[158]

Looking more specifically at the rural areas and populations that Plan Colombia critics cite, several authors provide good context for the situation. In an article entitled, "Political Violence and Farm Household Efficiency in Colombia," María González and Rigoberto Lopez observe, "Production costs increase because of guerrilla or paramilitary

[154] Consultoría para los Derechos Humanos y el Desplazamiento, "Numero de Personas Desplazadas" [Number of persons displaced].

[155] Ibid.

[156] Ibid.

[157] Economic Commission on Latin America and the Caribbean, "Social Indicators and Statistics—Income Distribution—Gini Coefficient," CEPALSTAT—Databases and Statistical Publications, United Nations, http://interwp.cepal.org/cepalstat/WEB_CEPALSTAT/Portada.asp?idioma=i; World Development Indicators, The World Bank Data Bank, http://databank.worldbank.org/data/views/variableselection/selectvariables.aspx?source=world-development-indicators#.

[158] United Nations Data, "Intentional Homicide, Number and Rate per 100,000 Population," United Nations Statistics Division, last updated 1 August 2012, https://data.un.org/Data.aspx?d=UNODC&f=tableCode%3A1.

"taxes," extortion, and kidnapping for self-financing and for rent- seeking purposes. … In addition, land prices have also been distorted by the acquisition of significant amounts of farmland by drug traffickers for investment and money laundering, rendering such prices less correlated with returns on investment in violent areas."[159] Joshua Angrist and Adriana Kugler address a similar vein when they write that, "rural areas that saw accelerated coca production subsequently became considerably more violent, while urban areas were affected little. These findings are consistent with the view that the Colombian civil conflict is fueled by the financial opportunities that coca provides and that rent-seeking by combatants limits the economic gains from coca."[160] What makes the observations of these two articles so relevant here is that both are specifically describing the period just before Plan Colombia.

The years prior to Plan Colombia were full of violence, murder, and displacement as guerrilla groups, paramilitaries, and the state fought a drug-fueled war for control and survival. Plan Colombia did not bring violence to the rural areas, disadvantaged groups, or the country; the violence was already there. When the government put Plan Colombia in place in an effort to reduce the violence, it worked. This was not only true for the country as a whole, as explained in the section on crime, it was true for Colombia's vulnerable groups as well, the number of whom were murdered each year fell along with the national trend (though, as with the nation broadly, the rate is still much higher than it should be).[161]

Furthermore, many measurements show that the social situation of the population has been improving in Colombia since the beginning of Plan Colombia (though, as with the Gini index, progress is slow). Unemployment is down from 17.3% in 2000 to 10.1%

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[159] María A. González and Rigoberto A. Lopez, "Political Violence and Farm Household Efficiency in Colombia," *Economic Development and Cultural Change* 55, no. 2 (January 2007): 371, http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1086/508715.

[160] Joshua D. Angrist and Adriana D. Kugler, "Rural Windfall or a New Resource Curse? Coca, Income, and Civil Conflict in Colombia," *The Review of Economics and Statistics* 90, no. 2 (May 2008): 191, http://www.jstor.org/stable/40043141.

[161] Ministerio de Defensa, "Logros PCSD," 11.

in 2014.[162] Spending has grown on both education and health, as a percentage of GDP and in real terms.[163] Potable water, electricity, sanitation facilities, and sewage systems are more widely available, with the biggest gains occurring in rural areas.[164] Rates of both extreme poverty and poverty have fallen since 2002, not only at the national, metropolitan, and urban levels, but at the rural level as well.[165] Similarly, the depths of extreme poverty and poverty, measured by the poverty gap coefficient, have both fallen.[166]

Despite all these positives, it is true that there are a few negative indicators. For the general population, the enrollment rate in primary education decreased from 2000-2012 (though enrollment rates in pre-primary, secondary, and tertiary education all went up), and the availability of piped water at the home (as distinct from availability of improved drinking water) decreased slightly.[167] For women specifically, although representation in the national parliament has grown, the economic situation has worsened in comparison to men: the wage ratio has fallen, except for those with 13 years or more of school (where the ratio has improved), the proportion of women in wage employment has fallen slightly, and the ratio of female-to-male poverty has grown (the number of women in poverty has decreased, but the number of men in poverty has decreased faster).[168]

The foregoing arguments are not meant to imply that the conflict surrounding Plan Colombia has not been brutal, or even that the conflict has not harmed certain groups more than others (for this is a surety in almost any armed conflict), the point is that Plan Colombia was a response to the brutality that was ongoing in Colombia, not the source of the brutality. The execution of Plan Colombia was far from perfect. As discussed previously, the military itself had a hand in a portion of the abuses against the

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[162] Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, *ECLAC, Statistical Yearbook for Latin America and the Caribbean, 2014* (LC/G.2634-P), (Santiago, Chile: 2014), 40.

[163] Ibid., 52, 58, 80.

[164] Ibid., 59–60.

[165] Ibid., 61.

[166] Ibid., 62.

[167] Ibid., 46–47, 59.

[168] Ibid., 61, 69–71.

civilian population. Additionally, the plan largely failed to bring about the significant social and political changes that will be required for long-term peace (though some of these changes may be in the works as part of the present, on-going peace talks between the government and the FARC). Nonetheless, Plan Colombia did achieve substantial success in dramatically improving the security situation and weakening the FARC sufficiently to bring it to the negotiating table. Further, these improvements have brought a modicum of social and economic success to people all across Colombia, rather than just to the elite, as the statistics above show.

Besides rebutting the notion that Plan Colombia was a source of insecurity for particular sectors, it is important to separate the plan from the actions of those who executed it. Just as in peaceful countries, we evaluate the laws separately from the actions of the politicians, police force, and judicial system, so should we evaluate Plan Colombia as separate from the actions of Colombian's politicians, security forces members, and judiciary members. As the Government Accountability Office points out, the goals of Pastrana's plan were to "(1) reduce the flow of illicit narcotics and improve security; (2) promote social and economic justice; and (3) promote the rule of law."[169] The pillars of Uribe's version, as described by Alejo Vargas Velásquez, were "(a) the protection of the rights of all citizens; (b) the protection of democratic values, pluralism and democratic institutions; and (c) the solidarity and cooperation of the entire community."[170] The abuse and murder of citizens, the theft of land, the collusion with paramilitary groups, were all illegal and counter to the strategy and goals of Plan Colombia. These trespasses are not reasons to condemn the strategy, rather like the actions of a police officer who also works for the mob is not a reason for condemning the city's crime fighting strategy.

To criticize Plan Colombia properly on the grounds that it harmed certain groups more than others would require demonstrating that the nature of the plan encouraged that harm, and that it encouraged harm beyond what a better constructed plan would have

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[169] Ford, *Drug Reduction Goals*, 11.

[170] Alejo Vargas Velásquez, "The Profile of the Colombian Armed Forces: A Result of the Struggle against Guerrillas, Drug-Trafficking and, Terrorism," in *Debating Civil-Military Relations in Latin America*, ed. David R. Mares and Rafael Martínez (Eastbourne, Great Britain: Sussex Academic Press, 2014), 142.

done (for as mentioned previously, armed conflict by its nature tends to cause disproportionate harm to the various groups involved). Plan Colombia definitely failed to achieve some of its goals, and one might criticize it on these grounds, but it was not a plan designed to injure any (legitimate) sectors of society, nor was injury of any one legitimate group a foregone conclusion of the plan.

Getting the distinction correct, the failure of the strategy versus the failure of the people or institutions, is important because it directly affects the lessons that should be learned from Colombia's situation and whether Plan Colombia provides a useful model.

D.   CONCLUSION

The security picture in Colombia, and the military's effect on security, is a complicated and fluctuating one: there have been security gains in some areas, but setbacks in others, and the dramatic gains of the early 2000s have been offset somewhat by losses over the last several years. In spite of this, there is a good case for the positive role of the military in the pursuit of citizen security during Plan Colombia. The military's successes against the insurgency precipitated a significant decline in some of the most egregious crimes (such as murder, massacre, and kidnapping), and the successes provided the environment in which the rest of the state could do its share. (Whether the rest of the state performed does not reflect on the military.) The military may not have completely defeated the insurgencies, nor did it take back all of the ungoverned territory, but it made impressive gains (especially considering the conditions under which it started in the 1990s), and it allowed Colombia to move from a place where, as Robinson put it, "panic was setting in" among citizens at the idea that the FARC would win and the Colombian state would fail, to a place where Forbes lists it as one of "the ten coolest places to visit in 2015."[171] There is much to be done, and much that could have been done better, but the net change is nonetheless quite positive.

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[171] Robinson, "Another 100 Years," 43; Ann Abel, "The 10 Coolest Places to Visit in 2015," *ForbesLife*, 25 November 2014, http://www.forbes.com/sites/annabel/2014/11/25/the-10-coolest-places-to-visit-in-2015/.

IV. U.S. MILITARY INVOLVEMENT AND COLOMBIA AS A SOURCE OF LESSONS FOR OTHER STATES

A. BUILDING PARTNER CAPACITY

Building partner capacity is conceptually straight forward: it means increasing a partner nation's ability to execute a particular task or mission by giving the partner some part of the training, materiel, advice, education, etc. that the U.S. military gives itself (i.e., it means applying the components of building U.S. capacity to partner nations). The term "building partner capacity" is very broad and is independent of the type of capacity, the amount of capacity, or the type of partner. It applies similarly to a small military with minimal capacity that needs considerable help, as to a large military with significant capacity that perhaps only needs assistance in some very specific skill. Although conceptually straightforward, in practice building partner capacity can be challenging because resource constraints and political or cultural barriers can impede the ability of the United States to provide the capacity.[172]

Despite the challenges of implementation, building partner capacity has an established history in the U.S. military and continues to generate interest thanks to the idea that such actions provide the potential for relatively high-reward with relatively low risk. The military segment of U.S. government efforts to build capacity in a partner nation is generally a small portion of the overall effort, with other areas such as the economy and civilian government composing a significant share. Nonetheless, military training and advising are frequently used, and used with the expectation of a high rate of return, making such efforts worthy of study.

U.S. special operations forces have long participated in capacity-building operations, and the United States Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) is specifically tasked with conducting capacity-building operations (though conventional forces are frequently involved as well). As Moyar, Pagan, and Griego point out,

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[172] United States Air Force, *United States Air Force Irregular Warfare Strategy* (Washington, DC: 2013), 4, http://fas.org/irp/doddir/usaf/iw-strategy.pdf; Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Foreign Internal Defense* (JP 3-22) (Washington, DC: 12 July 2010), VI-30-32, http://www.dtic.mil/doctrine/new_pubs/jp3_22.pdf.

"USSOCOM Publication 1 calls upon special operations forces to train, advise, and assist partner institutions in order to build their capacity, which in turn will reduce U.S. visibility, risk, and cost."[173] The potential to commit a relatively small amount of U.S. resources in a foreign nation such that the partner forces will be empowered to create security for themselves, while achieving a U.S. strategic goal in the process, is an attractive proposition, and it is a proposition that may be increasing in attractiveness thanks to the apparent war-weariness of the U.S. populace. However, even a relatively small commitment of resources is a waste if it is not capable of achieving its goals. Whether or not U.S. military training can actually improve the capacity of partner nations to ensure the security of their own citizens is not a resolved question. A survey of articles on the topic reveals considerable support for the idea that U.S. military training is beneficial (though not effective in isolation), but there is reasonable evidence to the contrary, and an overall lack of empirical data either way.

One of the arguments against the utility of U.S. training can be found in an article by Thomas Bruneau titled "Challenges in Building Partner Capacity: Civil-Military Relations in the United States and New Democracies." Bruneau argues that the United States currently lacks a national strategy, as demonstrated by the poor results of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, and that the lack of a strategy impedes the United States' ability to build partner capacity.[174] It is true that just as the efforts in Iraq and Afghanistan suffered from a lack of strategy, so too will attempts to build partner capacity. But it is not that building capacity is difficult without a strategy (unless the lack of strategy creates a constantly shifting set of resources or goals), the problem is that there is no solid basis for determining which capacities to build in which partners. It is an extension of the same problem that the U.S. military has for itself: how can the military effectively allocate resources to train, equip, and prepare itself for current or future engagements if it lacks a guiding strategy? The lack of strategy does not mean that the U.S. military is no longer

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[173] Moyar, Pagan, and Griego, *Persistent Engagement*, 1.

[174] Thomas Bruneau, "Challenges in Building Partner Capacity: Civil–Military Relations in the United States and New Democracies," *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 26, no. 3 (2015): 440, doi: 10.1080/09592318.2014.982880.

able to create, for example, new fighter pilots, what it means is that the military is just guessing as to what skills or planes the pilots should have, or even as to whether it needs the pilots at all.

We agree with Bruneau that the lack of strategy creates problems for the United States; however, I disagree that these problems have any special bearing on the concept of building partner capacity. The lack of strategy creates problems for almost any military endeavor. Whether the United States is trying to achieve some goal by taking direct military action itself, or it is trying to achieve the goal by gaining the assistance of a partner nation after helping that partner develop the ability to obtain the goal, the problems resulting from a lack of strategy are the same.

The relevance of strategy to building partner capacity is in the distinction between grand strategy and strategy. Bruneau's argument (and my response) is focused on grand strategy, which Peter Feaver defines as "the collection of plans and policies that comprise the state's deliberate effort to harness political, military, diplomatic, and economic tools together to advance that state's national interest."[175] Strategy at the more basic level is defined as "a plan of action or policy designed to achieve a major or overall aim."[176] Grand strategy is the overarching guide for the state; strategy is just how some individual or group is going to accomplish a major and/or long-term goal. While the lack of a grand strategy makes it difficult to effectively use military tools such as building partner capacity to advance the well-being of the nation, individual strategic objectives may still be served by building partner capacity. For example, the United States had strategic objectives to reduce the amount of drugs entering the United States and to prevent the overthrow of the Colombian state by the FARC. Whether these were useful objectives is informed by the state's grand strategy, but either way, having decided on such objectives the state had to choose how to pursue them. Building partner capacity was one of the means by which to do so, and it was effective in preventing the overthrow of the Colombian state (though it was not effective in reducing the flow of drugs).

[175] Peter Feaver, "What Is Grand Strategy and Why Do We Need It?," Foreign Policy, 8 April 2009, http://foreignpolicy.com/2009/04/08/what-is-grand-strategy-and-why-do-we-need-it/; Bruneau, "Challenges in Building Partner Capacity," 437.

[176] *New Oxford American Dictionary*, Apple version 2.2.1, s.v. "strategy."

Where the lack of a grand strategy does impact the ability of the United States to build partner capacity is in the area of building a partner's capacity to design and implement its own grand strategy. Bruneau rightly points out that unless the United States redevelops its own ability to create and implement grand strategy, it will not be able to help other states do the same. This is an important point, but for the purposes of this thesis, what is significant is the ability of the United States to build partner capacity in furtherance of specific goals (specifically its ability to improve the effectiveness of the Colombian military).

For those who support the idea that building partner capacity is a useful tool for the United States, Plan Colombia is often touted as an example of capacity-building done right. Even within this one example, however, there is disagreement, and whether U.S. military training efforts had a positive effect is certainly not well established. Additionally, the effects of U.S. military training in Colombia, as distinct from other types of aid (such as monetary, counter-drug, social development), are not well examined, and all areas suffer from a lack of empirical study. Similar to the literature on Plan Colombia generally, opinions on U.S. military efforts tend to fall into either a strongly positive, or a strongly negative camp. The article mentioned earlier by Dube and Naidu on U.S. military aid provides an example of the negative camp. While the article does not separate military training from other forms of aid such as monetary and equipment donations, and it does not indicate why U.S. training efforts might have failed, the findings do suggest that training was ineffective since it failed to reduce paramilitary or guerrilla attacks in areas with military bases compared with areas lacking military bases.[177]

Moyar, Pagan, and Griego present an explanation claiming nearly the opposite of Dube and Naidu's, representing the positive camp. For these authors, training by U.S. special operations forces increased Colombian military capacity and led to considerable success in fighting the illegally armed groups and reducing human rights violations.[178]

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[177] Dube and Naidu, "Bases, Bullets, and Ballots," 26.

[178] Moyar, Pagan, and Griego, *Persistent Engagement*, 52–55.

Others question whether U.S. military training was even needed. This hypothesis starts by observing that Colombia decided on its own, before the U.S. entered into Plan Colombia, to revamp and professionalize its military to fight the insurgency. It then asserts that Colombia did not need U.S. instruction on how to fight a jungle insurgency (something it had been doing for a long time), what Colombia needed was to find the political will to conduct the fight and some monetary help to allow it to do so.[179]

B.   COLOMBIA AS A CASE STUDY

Plan Colombia provides a useful case to study for a couple of reasons. First, although U.S. military assistance to, and cooperation with, Colombia stretches back to the late 1930s, Plan Colombia represents a substantial increase in U.S. resources over previous efforts.[180] Since signing onto the plan in 2000, the United States has provided significant support to Plan Colombia, including a huge amount of aid and equipment, and thousands of trainers and advisors to the Colombian military and government.[181] In financial terms, from fiscal year 2000 through fiscal year 2014, the United States spent about $9.5 billion in support of Plan Colombia and its successor programs.[182] While this is a massive amount, it is worth noting that Colombia's own share was considerably larger. To contrast the shares of the partners, Stuart Lippe explains that "between 2000 and 2006, the GOC spent $20 billion on the military and police (not including pensions and other non-military expenditures), while the United States provided $3 billion."[183] Concerning the United States' personnel contributions, Isacson describes the limits set on U.S. troop numbers in Colombia: "When Plan Colombia was approved in 2000, Congress placed legal caps on the numbers of military personnel and civilian contractors who could

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[179] A hypothesis suggested for exploration by Maiah Jaskoski in a meeting with the author, 7 August 2014.

[180] Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Latin America and United States Military Assistance*, Washington, DC: Historical Division, Joint Secretariat, Joint Chiefs of Staff, 20 June 1960, 119–120.

[181] Beittel, *Colombia: Background*, 4; Adam Isacson, "Failing Grades: Evaluating the Results of Plan Colombia," *Yale Journal of International Affairs* 1, no. 1 (2005): 141, http://www.yale.edu/yjia/articles/Vol_1_Iss_1_Summer2005/IsacsonFinal.pdf.

[182] Stuart Lippe, "There is No Silver Bullet and Other Lessons from Colombia," *InterAgency Journal* 5, no. 3 (2014): 31, http://thesimonscenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/IAJ-5-3Fall-2014-23-35.pdf.

[183] Lippe, "There Is No Silver Bullet," 32.

be in Colombia at any given time. Four years later the military cap has been raised from 400 to 800, and the contractor cap has been raised from 400 to 600."[184] These caps do not, however, necessarily represent the actual number of personnel in the country. Finding accurate numbers for historical troop deployments is difficult, but according to a 2009 interview with the U.S. ambassador to Colombia, U.S. troop presence in Colombia reached a peak of approximately 500 personnel in the mid-2000s and declined in the late 2000s to about 250 personnel.[185] For perspective on these numbers, it is useful to look at other troop deployments around the world. Honduras hosts the 500–600 U.S. service members of Joint Task Force-Bravo (whose mission, according to the unit's website, is "to build partnerships with Honduras and other Central American countries to foster security, stability, and prosperity for the Americas").[186] In the Philippines, several hundred U.S. special operations forces advise and support host-nation counter-terrorist operations (this is in addition to the thousands of U.S. military personnel that visit the country on exercises that are meant to enhance both U.S. and Philippine military capacity).[187] In the first half of the 2000s, approximately 30 countries world-wide hosted 100 or more U.S. troops, and about 15 countries hosted 1000 or more (these numbers seem to include only troops in permanent billets, as opposed to those on temporary duty—even long-term temporary duty—which means the actual number of troops in a country at a given time could potentially be considerably higher).[188]

Having made the massive donations of aid just mentioned, the United States should ask whether the aid to Colombia accomplished much, and whether the nature of

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[184] Isacson, "Failing Grades," 141.

[185] Adriaan Alsema, "U.S. Troops in Colombia Are Decreasing: Ambassador," Colombia Reports, 20 July 2009, http://colombiareports.com/us-troops-in-colombia-are-decreasing-ambassador/.

[186] Joint Task Force, "Frequently Asked Questions about JTF-B," Joint Task Force–Bravo, United States Southern Command, http://www.jtfb.southcom.mil/questions/topic.asp?id=1126.

[187] International Crisis Group, "The Philippines: Counter-Insurgency Versus Counter-Terrorism in Mindanao," *Asia Report* no. 152 (Brussels: International Crisis Group, 14 May 2008): 13, 21–22, http://www.crisisgroup.org/~/media/Files/asia/south-east-asia/philippines/152_counterinsurgency_vs _counter_terrorism_in_mindanao.pdf; Richard Swain, "Case Study: Operation Enduring Freedom Philippines," (Defense Technical Information Center, October 2010), 23, http://www.dtic.mil/dtic/tr/fulltext/u2/a532988.pdf.

[188] Tim Kane, "U.S. Troop Deployment Dataset," Center for Data Analysis, The Heritage Foundation, Microsoft Excel file (1 March 2006), http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2006/05/global-us-troop-deployment-1950-2005.

that aid holds its own lessons learned (also a useful question for other donors of foreign aid). To put it another way, Plan Colombia represents an opportunity to learn both about how to execute a mission to build partner capacity, and whether such a mission should even be attempted.

The second reason Plan Colombia is a useful subject of study is that it represents a country that has managed to push back its insurgency (if not completely defeat it). As Lippe states, "Colombia's remarkable recovery from its low point in the late 1990s makes it an important case study."[189] The successful (and failed) techniques of Colombia's counterinsurgency may be applicable to other conflicts around the world, and there are plenty of opportunities where such lessons could be applied. Numerous weak or failing states are plagued by insurgencies and the United States and other wealthy nations frequently find that some national interest is attached to the fate of the faltering states. Understanding what is effective in dealing with an insurgency, and what is ineffective, and what are the trade-offs of various courses of action, is important for all parties. It is true that the situation in each country is different and that there is no single blueprint for counterinsurgency. Nonetheless, diverse states can learn from each other even when their problems are not exactly the same. Afeikhena Jerome, a member of the Nigeria Governors Forum, makes just this point when he describes useful lessons from Colombia's fight against the FARC for his country's own fight against Boko Haram.[190]

Lessons on building partner capacity have substantial relevancy in the current day thanks to the many places in which such efforts are taking place. From the battlefields of Iraq to the offices of security cooperation in embassies around the world, representatives of the U.S. military are involved in a huge range of efforts to assist partner nations, and all of those representatives, plus the policy-makers directing them, need to understand what will help, and what will hurt, the partner nation in question.

The experience of Plan Colombia can help improve the understanding of capacity-building operations, but as Bryan Batson observes, "the work of the U.S.

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[189] Lippe, "There is No Silver Bullet," 24.

[190] Jerome, "Lessons from Colombia," 96.

military in Colombia is understudied."[191] It is true that it is standard practice for military teams to write after-action reports following training or other operations with partner nations so that lessons learned are captured and passed on. Unfortunately, these reports, though numerous, are frequently hard to find, even for other members of the military. Furthermore, they tend to have a limited scope, dealing with specific training events, and they are usually focused on the tactical level. Systematic studies that consolidate the wealth of knowledge that exists in the aggregate are rare, thus making it difficult for lessons to be learned, especially for those operating at the strategic level.

C.   THE EFFECTS OF U.S. CAPACITY-BUILDING IN COLOMBIA

Though rare, as just mentioned, some systematic studies do exist. The work by Moyar, Pagan, and Griego is one such study. Published by Joint Special Operations University, the report is focused on the activities of, and lessons learned for, U.S. special operations forces. Although this focus omits the conventional forces of the U.S. military, the report is still quite useful because it is the special operations forces that are primarily responsible for training and advising foreign militaries (though interest in using conventional forces for this purpose is growing). Robert D. Ramsey III's paper, *From El Billar to Operations Fenix and Jaque*, provides another good, systematic study of the military experience during Plan Colombia, with insights from both the Colombian and U.S. perspectives.

What these studies and others like them suggest is that the U.S. military effort was largely successful, and that this success came despite, or even because of, the relatively small, supporting role of the U.S. military aid. As Moyar, Pagan, and Griego write, "U.S. aid contributed to the dramatic turnaround in Colombian performance that began in 1998, but U.S. assistance was not the decisive factor."[192] Plan Colombia was a Colombian

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[191] Bryan K. Batson, "Advising Success: Lessons from American Military Assistance Efforts since World War II" (Fort Leavenworth, KS: School of Advanced Military Studies, United States Army Command and General Staff College, 2011), 8.

[192] Moyar, Pagan, and Griego, "*Persistent Engagement*," 49.

project, led by Colombia.[193] U.S. government support amounted to billions of dollars, extensive donations of equipment, and training for tens of thousands of Colombian security forces members, but even with these large numbers U.S. aid composed a small part of the overall effort expended, and required, in Colombia. As Isacson points out, "the entire aid package to Colombia—both military and economic—adds up to only 0.8% of Colombia's GDP."[194] With security sector budget allocations in Colombia amounting to over 5% of GDP during the mid-2000s (the period referenced by Isacson), the U.S. contribution constitutes a boost of approximately 15%.[195] This was enough to be important, but as mentioned, not enough to be decisive. What the monetary aid did accomplish was the sustainment of Colombian programs and operations, allowing the Colombian military to continue its fight in places and at times when it might otherwise have struggled.

Likewise, the military training and education programs made significant contributions to the Colombian military, but they were only part of the progress for Colombia. The U.S. provided training to 67,391 Colombian military members from FY 1999 through FY 2013, an average of 4,493 Colombians trained each year, with a total value of $249,782,424 for the training provided.[196] The Colombian military, however, stood at almost 260,000 members in 2007, having grown from around 154,000 in 1999, meaning that the majority of Colombian troops never received direct U.S. training.[197] Nonetheless, Moyar, Pagan, and Griego observe that the U.S. training was valuable to Colombia in areas such as "intelligence, planning, reconnaissance, communications, close-quarters combat, heavy weapons, and combat medicine," as well as in critical

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[193] Douglas Porch and Christopher W. Muller, "'Imperial Grunts' Revisited: The US Advisory Mission in Colombia," in *Military Advising and Assistance: From Mercenaries to Privatization, 1815–2007*, ed. Donald Stoker (London: Routledge Press, 2008), 180–181; Ramsey, "*From El Billar*," 49, 152–153.

[194] Isacson, "Failing Grades," 149.

[195] DeShazo, Primiani, and McLean, *Back from the Brink*, 15.

[196] "Foreign Military Training and DOD Engagement Activities of Interest," United States Department of State, http://www.state.gov/t/pm/rls/rpt/fmtrpt/index.htm. Figures exclude training paid for by Colombia via the Foreign Military Sales Program. We make the assumption here that each training program listed by the State Department was for a different individual, but it is possible that some individuals attended more than one program, thereby reducing the overall number of people trained.

[197] DeShazo, Primiani, and McLean, *Back from the Brink*, 16.

aviation skills.[198] Even so, in a May 2013 interview with Moyar, Pagan, and Griego, General (Retired) Carlos Alberto Ospina Ovalle, who served as commander of the Colombian Army and then as Commander of all of the Colombian Armed Forces, observed that "the most important thing that Colombia gained from U.S. military assistance was the transfer of culture. The Americans served as our role models. We watched their behavior, their discipline, their humility, and their commitment to their country, and tried to emulate them."[199] Ramsey comes to similar findings in his work: "while senior Colombian Military leaders and MOD officials acknowledged the importance of U.S. assistance, several focused not on the amount of money or training or equipment—all of which they said were useful. Instead, they cited two things: the importance of being treated with professional respect and the value of interacting with U.S. military personnel."[200] The presence of, and interaction with, the respected and powerful U.S. military enhanced the morale of the Colombian military (good morale being important to the success of any fighting force) and gave the Colombians a broader source of knowledge from which to draw solutions for their country's problems.[201]

The supporting, relatively small role of the United States should not be viewed as a negative. Rather, this is as it should be. Many of the problems in the Colombian military come from sources that the United States cannot address.[202] As one example, the Colombian military is a reflection of the country's highly stratified civil society, and the lack of mobility up the ranks poses a problem for growing competent leaders.[203] The United States can point out such problems, but the impetus and methods for changing the system have to come from within the Colombian military.[204]

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[198] Moyar, Pagan, and Griego, "*Persistent Engagement*," 52–53.

[199] Ibid., 53.

[200] Ramsey, "*From El Billar*," 154.

[201] Ibid., 154–155.

[202] Porch and Muller, "'Imperial Grunts' Revisited," 182–186.

[203] Ibid.

[204] Ibid.

By helping where able—but without taking over the problem—the United States made it more likely that an enduring solution would be found. Such a strategy is not a guarantee of success, and it can certainly be slow and frustrating for all involved, but it ensures that the people who have the most at stake and who understand the problem best are the ones who provide the solutions. John Waghelstein, a U.S. veteran of advising efforts in El Salvador, sums up the issue succinctly: "It is their war and they must win it … We probably cannot deliver victory from outside and if we can, it probably is transitory."[205] The lesson of Colombia is that to be successful in building partner capacity, the United States must truly be a *partner*, and a minor one at that. The United States must exercise restraint and patience so that the solution can be developed from the inside, rather than being imposed by an outside power.

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[205] John D. Waghelstein, "Military-to-Military Contacts: Personal Observations-The El Salvador Case," *Low Intensity Conflict & Law Enforcement* 10, no. 2 (2001): 39, quoted in Ramsey, "*From El Billar*," 159.

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V.   CONCLUSION

This thesis analyzed whether or not the actions of the Colombian military improved the security of Colombian citizens during Plan Colombia. Military actions are often interpreted in terms of their effect on the security of the state, but the concern of this thesis was whether the benefits of military security actions outweighed the costs specifically for Colombian citizens. The thesis argued that for the citizens, the benefits of the Colombian military's involvement came in various forms including a greatly weakened insurgency and increased state presence across Colombia's territory. These are balanced against the costs, which included military human rights abuses against civilians and massive levels of migration, with resulting poverty, due to the fighting involving the military, insurgent groups, and paramilitaries. Considerable disagreement exists over the value of the military's involvement, as it does over many other aspects of Plan Colombia, including basic questions such as whether or not security improved and what were the sources of insecurity. This thesis added to the understanding of the security situation in Colombia, with a focus on the effects of military counterinsurgency operations on the lives of normal civilians, while also giving some attention to what the Colombian experience can tell the United States about its involvement in counterinsurgencies, especially its use of U.S. military members to train or advise foreign forces. Overall this thesis found that the use of the Colombian military during Plan Colombia increased citizen security, and furthermore that the United States played a positive role in this outcome.

In examining the issue, this thesis began by defining citizen security as the protection of life and of people's physical and material integrity, and then explored some of the main sources of insecurity in Colombia. With the focus of the thesis being on the military, the sources of insecurity that were emphasized were those over which the military had the greatest potential impact, namely the insurgent groups and paramilitaries. These several armed groups created considerable insecurity for Colombians through a wide range of actions, including assassinations, kidnappings, extortion, and indiscriminate attacks on civilian targets. Improving security required the state to both

degrade the ability of the illegal armed groups to carry out their crimes, and to re-establish its own presence throughout the country in order to provide continuing security and development services. Improved funding, equipment, and manpower for the military, as well as reforms in training and operations allowed the Colombian military to significantly weaken the illegal armed groups, and to regain large amounts of territory for the state, thus leading to a marked decrease in the crimes having the greatest negative effect on citizen security.

After investigating the Colombian security situation and the arguments for how and why the military improved the situation, this thesis discussed some of the main counterarguments. First was the concern that the national-level data used to support the argument is not sufficient to establish a causal link between military actions and improved security. This is a valid critique; unfortunately, the localized data that would serve to prove or disprove the hypothesis is hard to come by. In the absence of localized data, authors are forced to do the best they can with national level numbers.

The next critique pointed out that although it is meant to protect citizens, the military itself committed human rights abuses during Plan Colombia. This thesis agrees that these abuses occurred and that they were appalling, the more so for being committed by an organization whose raison d'être is the protection of its country's citizens. However, despite the terrible nature of the false positive murders, the overall effect of the military remained beneficial. This is true both because the total number of lives lost by Colombian civilians was greatly reduced, and because the military maintained the legitimacy to continue its proper work, even after the false positives scandal came to light.

The last of the principal critiques addressed by this thesis was that Plan Colombia helped elite interests while harming rural and poor Colombians. While Colombia is certainly a place with a tremendous amount of inequality—as explained in Chapter III—the sources of the inequality, and the inequality itself, existed before Plan Colombia. Moreover, during Plan Colombia, the gap between poor and wealthy actually decreased (albeit insufficiently to answer the concerns of those fighting for economic and social justice, or to create a strong sense of loyalty to the state by those on the poor end of the

economic scale). The point is that Plan Colombia and the military did not create the problem; rather they created a secure environment in which the problem could be addressed.

After examining the Colombian military's role in citizen security during Plan Colombia, this thesis briefly examined the role of the U.S. military during the plan. There is much to be studied concerning the U.S military's actions and effects in Colombia, and more research should be done on this topic. Unfortunately, the amount of study conducted so far is limited. Even so, there are some lessons that can be drawn from the U.S. experience. The primary lesson is that the U.S. military served a beneficial role by providing assistance in areas where the Colombian military was weak (such as in communications, intelligence, and aviation), while remaining in a small enough role that the Colombians could produce a Colombian solution to Colombian problems.

In the end, the security picture in Colombia, and the military's effect on security, is a complicated and fluctuating one: there were security gains in some areas, but setbacks in others, and the dramatic gains of the early 2000s have been offset somewhat by losses over the last several years. In spite of this, there is a strong case for the positive role of the military in the pursuit of citizen security during Plan Colombia. The military's successes against the insurgency precipitated a significant decline in some of the most egregious crimes (such as murder, massacre, and kidnapping), and the successes also provided the environment in which the rest of the state could do its share. (Whether the rest of the state performed, does not reflect on the military.) The military may not have completely defeated the insurgencies, nor did it take back all of the ungoverned territory, but it made impressive gains (especially considering the conditions under which it started in the 1990s). The experience of Plan Colombia demonstrates that a country's military can play a positive role in the provision of citizen security, and that the U.S. military can be of assistance in such an effort.

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